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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Ninth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BLADY, Sharon	Kirkfield Park	N.D.P.
BLAIKIE, Bill, Hon.	Elmwood	N.D.P.
BOROTSIK, Rick	Brandon West	P.C.
BRAUN, Erna	Rossmere	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
BRIESE, Stuart	Ste. Rose	P.C.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
GRAYDON, Cliff	Emerson	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
HOWARD, Jennifer, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri, Hon.	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Wellington	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McFADYEN, Hugh	Fort Whyte	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
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ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELBY, Erin	Southdale	N.D.P.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WHITEHEAD, Frank	The Pas	N.D.P.
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	N.D.P.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 13, 2010

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 20—The University College of the North Amendment Act

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), that Bill 20, The University College of the North Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Collège universitaire du Nord, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, this bill is important because it ensures consistency in the governance process among universities across the province. It's important that all universities share features that ensure academic independence, and I believe the amendments introduced today will enable University College of the North to do just that. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

PETITIONS

PTH 15—Traffic Signals

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

In August 2008, the Minister of Transportation stated that traffic volumes at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald exceeded those needed to warrant the installation of traffic signals.

Every school day, up to a thousand students travel through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts their safety at risk.

Thousands of vehicles travel daily through this intersection in Dugald where the lack of traffic signals puts at risk the safety of these citizens.

In 2008, there was a 300 percent increase in accidents at this intersection.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Transportation consider the immediate installation of traffic signals at the intersection of PTH 15 and Highway 206 in Dugald.

To request that the Minister of Transportation recognize the value of the lives and well-being of the students and citizens of Manitoba.

Signed by K. Kirsch, C. Siewart, D. Slashinsky and many, many other Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Ophthalmology Services—Swan River

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Swan Valley region has a high population of seniors and a very high incidence of diabetes. Every year, hundreds of patients from the Swan Valley region must travel to distant communities for cataract surgery and additional pre-operative and post-operative appointments.

These patients, many of whom are sent as far away as Saskatchewan, need to travel with an escort who must take time off work to drive the patient to his or her appointments without any compensation. Patients who cannot endure this expense and hardship are unable to have the necessary treatment.

The community has located an ophthalmologist who would like to practise in Swan River. The local Lions Club has provided funds for the necessary

equipment, and the Swan River Valley hospital has space to accommodate this service.

The Minister of Health has told the Town of Swan River that it has insufficient infrastructure and patient volumes to support a cataract surgery program; however, residents of the region strongly disagree.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health to consider rethinking her refusal to allow an ophthalmologist to practise in Swan River and to consider working with the community to provide this service without further delay.

And this is signed by L. Parenteau, S. Borland, S. Kennedy and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission— Liquor Licences

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has substantially raised the cost of annual licence—liquor licences for restaurants, cocktail lounges and other Manitoba businesses.

The MLCC justifies this increase by stating that the cost of an annual licence is being increased to better reflect rising administration costs.

For some small business owners, the cost of an annual liquor licence has more than doubled. These fee hikes are a significant burden for business owners.

The decision to increase the annual licence fee, while at the same time eliminating the 2 percent supplementary licence fee payable on purchases of spirit, wine and coolers, has the effect of greatly disadvantaging small businesses. Small businesses which do not purchase liquor from the MLCC in large volume will not receive the same benefit from the elimination of this supplementary fee. Instead, they are facing substantially increased costs simply to keep their doors open.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider

working with MLCC to find alternate means of addressing rising administrative costs.

And to request the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider working with MLCC to revise the decision to implement a significant annual licence fee increase.

And to urge the Minister responsible for the administration of The Liquor Control Act to consider ensuring that the unique challenges faced by small businesses are better taken into account in the future.

And this petition is signed by S. Boslovitch, M. Cameron and S. White and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Bipole III

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background for this petition is as follows:

Manitoba Hydro has been forced by the NDP government to construct its next high-voltage direct transmission line, Bipole III, down the west side of Manitoba.

This decision will cost Manitoba ratepayers at least \$640 million more than an east-side route. The Province of Manitoba is facing its largest deficit on record, and the burden of this extra cost could not come at a worse time.

Between 2002 and 2009 electricity rates increased by 16 percent, and Manitoba Hydro has filed a request for further rate increases totalling 6 percent over the next two years.

A western Bipole III route will invariably lead to more rate increases.

In addition to being cheaper, an east-side route would be hundreds of kilometres shorter and would be more reliable than the west side.

West-side residents have not been adequately consulted and have identified serious concerns with the proposed line.

The NDP government has not been able to provide any logical justification for a west-side route.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider proceeding with the cheaper, shorter and more

logical east-side route, subject to necessary regulatory approvals, to save ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars during these challenging economic times.

This petition's signed by E. Billowski, I. Dean, R. Lane and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

* (13:40)

PTH 16 and PTH 5 North—Traffic Signals

Mr. Stuart Briese (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by R. Scott, A. Dutko, W. Denton and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Whiteshell Provincial Park—Lagoons

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba's provincial parks were established to protect our natural resources and the environment for future generations.

In July 2009, the lagoons in the vicinity of Dorothy Lake and Otter Falls in the Whiteshell Provincial Park overflowed, creating concerns that untreated sewage made its way into the Winnipeg River system and ultimately into Lake Winnipeg.

In addition, emergency discharges had to be undertaken at lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park four times in 2005, once in 2007 and once in April 2009.

Concerned stakeholders in the Whiteshell Provincial Park have repeatedly asked the provincial government to develop plans to address the shortcomings with the park's lagoons and to ensure the environment is protected, but the plans have not materialized.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider acknowledging that more timely action should have been taken to address the shortcomings with the lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park in order to protect the environment.

To request the Minister of Conservation to consider immediately developing short- and long-term strategies to address the shortcomings with lagoons in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and to consider implementing them as soon as possible.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by J. Fawley, K. Schepp, S. Schepp and many, many other concerned Manitobans.

Medical Clinic in Weston and Brooklands Area

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Walk-in medical clinics provide a valuable health-care service.

The closure of the Westbrook Medical Clinic has left both Weston and Brooklands without a community-based medical clinic.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to consider how important it is to have a medical clinic located in the Weston and Brooklands area.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by K. Morden, F. Kent and K. Gushue and many, many other fine Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public

gallery where we have with us today, we have United Steelworkers from eight locals across Manitoba representing the District 3 Steelworkers, who are the guests of the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton).

And also in the public gallery, we have Ed Hinsburg, who is the guest of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

And also in the public gallery, we have from Assiniboine Community College, we have 17 college students under the direction of Ms. Linda Dustan Selinger. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

And also in the public gallery, we have from Warren Collegiate, we have 65 grade 11 students under the direction of Mrs. Lee Stewart. This school is located in the constituency on—constituency of the honourable member for the Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you all here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Agriculture Industry Producer Quota Tax

Mr. Hugh McFadyen (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, when we came into the Chamber three weeks ago today, members on this side of the House were looking forward and hoping for a budget that would address the major challenges in Manitoba today and into the future. What we got instead was a toxic combination of debt, deficits, service cuts, as well as tax increases.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we look at the rapidly increasing debt, the cuts to services in various places around the province and the new taxes—we've already highlighted the issue of the new tax on electricity—rising water rates, taxes on cars, camping, increasing Pharmacare rates for seniors, but we were shocked to find in that budget a new tax on milk, eggs and poultry for Manitobans, a tax that will impact on the producers of Manitoba and have a—put upward pressure on the prices that Manitoba families pay for milk, eggs and chicken.

I want to ask the Premier: How is it that he can bring forward a budget that increases the price of milk, eggs and food for Manitoba families and hurts our farm families in the process?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for a question on why the budget's good for Manitoba because—and let's be clear, the members will vote against this budget which invests—*[interjection]* I'm glad they have confirmed that that will vote against this budget because they will be voting against investing in front-line services for health, for education, for services to thousands of children as well as additional resources for infrastructure. They will be voting against an economic growth stimulation program that will generate 29,000 additional jobs in Manitoba. They will be voting against the program which manages public expenditure and has a plan to accelerate down payments on the debt. And they will be voting against a budget which maintains Manitoba as one of the most affordable places to live.

On the specifics, we are the government that supports supply management in Manitoba; they are the government that would deregulate it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, we are going to vote against reckless spending on a \$640-million wasteful project in Hydro. We're going to vote against budget cuts to hearing-impaired children, which you saw about today in the newspaper. We're going to vote against cuts to adult education in Portage la Prairie. We're going to vote against cuts to addiction services for Manitobans. Tomorrow, we're going to vote against a new tax on food for Manitoba families.

Will the Premier today, in advance of tomorrow's vote, will he, at the very least, withdraw this new tax on family farms, the people who produce the eggs, the milk, the food that feeds Manitoba families? Will he withdraw it before the vote tomorrow or is he going to require his caucus to stand up and vote in favour of a tax hike on food for Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, let's be absolutely clear. It's this government that supports the supply management system for farmers, which gives them—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I just want members to take a couple of seconds and have a look up in the public gallery. We have a lot of guests here today that come from a long distance to come and hear question period, and they want to be able to hear the questions and the answers, and I think we should give them that right, and I'm asking the co-operation of honourable members.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the supply management system, which is the—supported by this government and opposed by the members opposite who would deregulate it, is one that allows farmers to get a return based on their cost of production and provides them with a stable income. That is what we support on this side of the House.

The members opposite would deregulate and cast to the winds that stability of income for farmers and put them at the will of the free market, the international global free market, which would drive many of those producers out of business. That's the central issue. We support supply management; they oppose it.

Mr. McFadyen: Mr. Speaker, of all of the ridiculous, irrelevant responses he has provided, that ranks up at the top. The producers we're talking about are represented by members of this side of the House, and they stand up each and every day on behalf of those producers. They're going to continue to do so. It shouldn't be lost on members that those producers are not represented on that side of the House, and that is why they've introduced this mean-spirited tax on farm families in Manitoba.

* (13:50)

It's going to raise—it's going to take more—close to a million dollars out of the pockets of family farms in Manitoba, people who produce milk, people who produce eggs, people who produce poultry. They're going to tax them. They're going to give them nothing in return. There's no service in return. It's a new revenue grab because of his out-of-control spending on the west-side bipole.

Will he today apologize to Manitoba producers, and will he apologize to those Manitobans who, down the road, are going to pay more for their milk, for their eggs and for their basic food requirements?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member again puts misinformation on the record as he does every single day in this House. One day he wants to suggest that an expenditure not yet made takes away from funding in this budget when the expenditure's not even occurred yet. The expenditure increases in Manitoba over the last decade are the second lowest of all the provinces

And, Mr. Speaker, the supply management system is a system, including the Wheat Board which is under attack from the Conservatives, is a system

that we support on this side of the House. The members opposite are against supply management, whether of farm commodities or whether of wheat. If the member is sincere, let him stand up and say he supports the Wheat Board. Let him stand up and say he supports supply management. He will not do that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There's no sense trying to ask a question or answer a question. You can't hear a thing anyway. We've got guests here that come all the—from quite a ways here. Let's show a little bit of decency here, please. Let's have some decorum in the House. I know feelings get a little hard during question period, but let's have some decorum and respect for the institution that we are in today, okay, please. I'm asking the co-operation of all members.

The honourable First Minister still has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I reiterate that we support the supply management system. The members opposite oppose it; they have historically. The resources that we put into that ensure that farmers get a stable income based on the cost of production. It's one of the things we do to ensure that our producers can have a decent quality of life and predictability in their income. And I wish the members opposite would step up to—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Agriculture Industry Producer Quota Tax

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, and talking about putting misinformation on the record. Here I'll indicate what the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) has put on the record.

Mr. Speaker, on March 25th, in Interim Supply, I asked the Minister of Agriculture which commodity groups he had met with about his new quota tax. His response was, and I quote: "I've met with, I think all of the groups, all of the main groups." End quote. But representatives from the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, who are in the gallery today, say that the minister has not consulted with them as yet on this new tax; yet, the tax on supply management food production will have a negative impact on family farms and the implications for consumers in higher food prices.

Will the Minister of Agriculture admit that this government likes to tax first and consult later? Why have they resorted to taxing our family farms who produce our food?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Acting Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this issue and I want to make it clear that we support orderly marketing for agriculture commodities, whether they be through supply management or whether they be through single-desk selling. That is not the message that we have heard from the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that there will be a levy on the sale of quota; however, those details are not worked out yet and there is—when those details will be worked out with the industry. They will be worked out with the industry.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would remind the farming community to think very carefully of what the members opposite say when their own members, when they speak out in public, have said. And the member from Carman said the Tories will put less focus on other issues such as health care, roads, social services, agriculture and rural depopulation and First Nations. So, they pretend in here that they care, out there they don't.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of Agriculture set out a directive to ministers telling them to cut services by 10 percent—that's the Minister of Finance—and to find a way to raise another 10 percent to fuel this NDP government's spending addiction.

Supply managed producers are very concerned about the impact of this new tax on their family farms. We believe that it is morally wrong to implement a tax that's going to hurt family farms and, at the same time, have implications for consumers.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba and other supply management groups why they're being forced to help offset the Premier's sinkhole budget?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think all Manitobans recognize the importance of finding a way to balance during a difficult time when the whole world is balancing—the whole world is balancing.

And you know, right now, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are saying, don't spend this much money. You have a problem with spending.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Yesterday they were asking us to spend more money. Yesterday they were asking about their roads. They were asking about their personal care homes.

Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. You have to make a plan, and we have made a plan, and we will work through this challenging time to ensure that front-line services, stimulus and other activities that are important to Manitoba continue.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Finance has just said it's okay to tax food on people. Tax the people's food, their milk and their eggs and their chickens. That's what the minister just said.

The minister can't provide a single example of how this new levy will benefit the managed-supply management producers. The impact on consumers is a backward, backdoor tax. The only one that's going to benefit from this tax is the former Minister of Agriculture. She and her colleagues can't control their outrageous spending.

This new levy sends a rotten message to the agriculture sector. It says, watch your wallet, we're coming for you with every new levy and fee hike that we can think of.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) grow a spine and tell the Minister of Finance that she shouldn't proceed with this new levy? Will he do the right thing?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, what I will tell the industry is that this government has always supported supply management and single-desk selling.

Unfortunately, it is not clear from the other side of the House what they would do. They talk out of both sides of their mouths. Sometimes they support it. Sometimes they support the open market. And if you support the open market for the sale of wheat, Mr. Speaker, it only leads me to believe that they also support the open market when it comes to the sale of all other commodities. That's the direction they would go in, and we will work with the industry.

The Minister of Agriculture has said, and like I say, that we are committed to working with all supply management organizations to discuss how this levy can be implemented in the way that will be

fair, and we will take the advice from the commodity groups, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Debt Increase

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Yesterday the Premier (Mr. Selinger) boasted that Manitoba's debt-to-GDP ratio is 27 percent. Well, that's certainly not something to be proud of, and certainly we don't think it is, especially when we compare it to our neighbouring Saskatchewan, where their debt-to-GDP ratio is 7.3 percent with a projected debt-to-GDP ratio of 5.7 percent by 2014.

Mr. Speaker, why, when other provinces are reducing their debt burden, are we—is this NDP government increasing ours, and why are they so proud of that?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll say to the member again what I did yesterday with regard to the Saskatchewan budget, and that, in fact, on summary budget basis, Saskatchewan's debt is higher than Manitoba's debt. Saskatchewan has a debt of over \$600 million and they have raided their Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, we have found a way to deal with this. And if you want to do some comparisons—the member opposite says our debt-to-GDP is not good. It's better than it was in the 1990s. It has gone up a point, and we could expect that, but ours is the fourth best in the country.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance wants to talk about the summary budget, and we—when we compare the consolidated debt of the two provinces—and let's put some facts on the record here. Saskatchewan's debt-to-GDP ratio on the consolidated debt is 14.3 percent compared to Manitoba's 45 percent. That's how out of touch with reality she is. That means that almost half the size of our economy is comprised of debt, and this figure is on the rise with no plan to address it.

*(14:00)

Do they recognize the seriousness of this issue, and what is their plan to reduce the debt burden that will ultimately left—be left for future generations, our children and our grandchildren?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the net debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to be 26.8 percent in Budget 2010; this is down from 32.9 percent in 1999. So the member opposite should look at what the—what situation we were in when the Conservatives were in

power and look at the work that we have done to reduce the—to bring down the debt. Under their regime they were spending 13 cents on the dollar to—on debt; ours is 6 cents on the dollar.

So the member opposite wants to make comparisons, she should compare where Manitoba was under their Conservative administration and the good work we have done to improve Manitoba's debt to GDP.

Mrs. Stefanson: A lot of that debt was run up under Howard Pawley, and if you can recall—interest rates—if you can recall—the fact is that interest rates at that time were a lot higher than they were during this NDP government's reign, and they are going up. The situation—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have some order. Order.

The honourable member for Tuxedo has the floor.

Mrs. Stefanson: The situation is getting worse, yet this government is refusing to do anything about it. They say that they are content with the existing debt burden that will be ultimately be left for future generations in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we believe it's unacceptable, Manitobans believe it's unacceptable, why won't they believe that it's unacceptable too?

Ms. Wowchuk: Well, Mr. Speaker, right across the country people and governments have recognized that there is a need to make investments during a downturn in the economy. We are making that investment and we are spending to keep our economy going. Yes, there will be a slight increase in the debt-to-GDP, but we are also playing—paying down the debt, and the member opposite should look at our five-year plan and look at how we intend to bring that debt down over time.

But I won't apologize for making investments in people so that in the long term we can protect front-line services and continue to make investments in people and at the same time bring down our debt and make a—have a plan in place as to how we are going to do it. There was no plan on the other side. Their plan was sell Manitoba Telephone System.

Persons with Disabilities Employment Marketability Advertising

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): In December of 2008 this NDP government launched a

multimedia campaign targeted at employers asking them to consider hiring people with disabilities.

I would like to ask the government today: How many people have been employed as the result of this campaign?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker, over several years the government was getting representations, particularly from persons with disabilities, asking that the government join with them in sending a very clear message to those that have the power to employ, the power to train people for advancements in the workplace, to get the clear signal out that it's important when—it's important that when we look at individuals in society we look at what they can do, not what they cannot do. And that is why the marketability strategy was launched in partnership—and I will say that the employment—the employer community was very supportive of this; the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce have been the backbone of the whole strategy to increase awareness.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But in March of this year we learned that this NDP government had spent over \$300,000 on this government's disability campaign trying to get employers to hire people with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't answer my question. I would ask him the direct question today: How many disabled individuals were hired as a result of this \$300,000 of taxpayers' money that was spent?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the member wants us to go and do a survey of every private employer in Manitoba—on the other hand, it's our view that the investment should be made in both raising awareness about the abilities of all Manitobans and bust some myths in this province that just because a person has a disability does not mean that they are disabled. Everyone has abilities. It's important that we join with others including the employer community to send that very clear message.

I'm very disappointed that members opposite would not support such an investment. It's very important that social marketing be available, Mr. Speaker. It does help to change attitudes and increase the opportunities for all Manitobans.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But the minister can huff and puff all he likes, Mr. Speaker, but he still hasn't answered

the question, and the reason he's not answering the question is because his own department has said, and I quote: The department is unable to provide you with the number of people hired as a result of the campaign as no records exist.

Well, Mr. Speaker, his own department indicates \$300,000 in taxpayers' money that could have gone to the front lines at a time when there are choices by a government to make, when they are running deficits of hundreds of millions of dollars, why would they take \$300,000 of precious taxpayers' money and spend it on a feel-good, pat-yourself-on-the-back campaign that has absolutely no outcomes and we don't know how many people were hired?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, if the member wants the public dollars going to make a public record under FIPPA, and go and ask every private employer, well, that's how they would spend the money.

We've invested, not just \$300,000, Mr. Speaker, in raising awareness about the opportunities—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, not only are we investing in raising awareness about the great untapped potential of persons with disabilities, not only are we investing so that employers will indeed turn their mind to that great untapped source of energy for their workplace so that we can ensure that all Manitobans have a greater opportunity, but we've invested, not just 300,000 but I would say 30 million, in persons with disabilities under the Opening Doors strategy, because it's not only about employment opportunities. It's about housing. It's about training. It's about support, disability supports.

I'm so disappointed in members opposite. Why don't they stand up for an inclusive Manitoba?

Health-Care Services Out-of-Province Patient Transfers

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, 21-year-old Rodmond Huska died in a Colorado hospital last year with only his mother at his side.

The insurance company could not find a bed in Winnipeg so that Rodmond could come home, but the Minister of Health and the WRHA said it wasn't about beds; it was solely because of a communication breakdown.

Does the Minister of Health still stand by her statement?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I want to say to members opposite that, of course, the loss of a loved one is a very difficult time that any family has to endure.

I want the House to know that there is a repatriation policy for family members that are out of the province. Generally speaking, people can be transferred back home within three days in—within North America, five days internationally, you know, off the mainland. We know that in some cases this does not occur because of specific issues with the patient.

We know that the goal of those days—three days and five days, respectively—is very often met. Last year there were about 130 repatriations done successfully. We're going to continue to work with the region to improve that policy and to improve care for Manitobans that may be abroad.

*(14:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, that was rhetoric and no answer.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table a copy of the call log provided by the Huskas' insurance company, and it shows that staff at the insurance company went to great lengths to find a bed in Winnipeg for Rodmond. Over a 24-hour period they made 15 phone calls to hospitals in Winnipeg to find him a bed, and, in fact, they did talk to all the right people. Every time they were told there are no beds. This was not miscommunication.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to tell us, and tell us why she said it was miscommunication, when, in fact, the evidence now shows that there were actually no beds.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, we have been in discussion with the family who has provided consent for us to speak to the insurance companies and gather such information. We know that there are documents that would suggest that there was information conveyed that there were no beds. There's information within the region that doesn't match that.

We're going to continue to investigate, particularly with the consent of the family, to have further conversations with insurance companies and, more importantly, we're going to work to ensure that that repatriation policy is as clear as can be. We're going to learn from families and any challenges that

they may have. We're going to continue to work on educating insurance companies to make sure that the process is as clear as possible so no family has to go through these challenges as well.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Health and the WRHA misled the family and they misled the public. They said, solely, the problem was due to miscommunication.

The WRHA told the media that while the Health Sciences Centre had no beds for Rodmond there were beds elsewhere in the city. We now know that that is absolutely false. The insurance company tried every single hospital in Winnipeg, and the call log shows it, and they were told there are no beds.

This Minister of Health covered up the truth about the death of Brian Sinclair. Now she is covering up the truth about the circumstances surrounding Rodmond Huska's death. I'd like to ask her today if she will apologize to Cheryl Huska, who's in the gallery today, to Rodmond's mother, for her misleading comments on this issue.

Ms. Oswald: Mr. Speaker, we know that evidence tabled today is information that has been provided from an insurance company. We know that there were numerous players in the conversation. We know that we're going to continue to review—as we've committed to the family previous to this—we're going to continue to review this case with a view to improving the repatriation process.

We will look again at the evidence. It is our view, based on the review that we have done, that communication between the hospitals, between the regional health authority and the insurance companies did break down. This was a problem. This is the central issue and we're going to continue to review.

The most important thing that we can do, Mr. Speaker, is to know that there is a goal in place for a three-day and a five-day repatriation process; 130 people last year met those goals. We're going to continue to work with the region to meet those goals and indeed to improve them.

Tembec Purchase Loan Option

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, there's a good possibility that a proposal to purchase the Tembec mill in Powerview-Pine Falls will be made either by the employees or by a third-party purchaser. When the Filmon government dealt

with that same issue in 1994, it made a MIOP loan available to the employees to assist with the purchase.

So I ask the minister responsible: Will loan assistance be available to a purchaser who puts forward a viable proposal to purchase that mill?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, we went out last winter to meet with the community and to discuss the situation there. Part of that effort was to make available to the community a million dollars to do the work that they needed to do, to both look at a possible purchase of the mill but, as well as, to look at other options for community development, economic development in that community. That committee has been working well together, continues to work well. My understanding is they have used part of that money to do some feasibility work on a possible purchase of that mill and we will work with them on the outcome of that report.

Mr. Hawranik: It took the Premier (Mr. Selinger) only a few days to provide \$90 million to build a stadium here, but it took the Premier also 99 days after the lockout began in Powerview-Pine Falls before he even bothered to travel the one hour north of the Perimeter Highway to visit our community.

So I ask the minister responsible: When a viable proposal comes forward to purchase the mill, will the minister act immediately to make loan assistance available, or will she wait months, as the Premier did, before he bothered to visit our community?

Ms. Howard: I was pleased to meet with the people who were locked out of that mill, and I met with them and with the Premier, and we met together with them. And I would just—thankfully, that lockout ended, and I would just remind members opposite the way that lockout ended.

That lockout ended because the union made an application under section 87(1) of The Labour Relations Act for expedited arbitration because they'd been out for more than 90 days. That is in the act because we put that forward, Mr. Speaker. Every one of them voted against it.

Mr. Hawranik: Mr. Speaker, it's not time to play politics with a community. Not time. This community is suffering, and it continues to suffer under this administration.

Our community is concerned about a timely response to this issue. In the private sector, decisions to be—need to be made on a timely basis, Mr. Speaker. If they're not made quickly, then the opportunity could be lost and with it, hundreds of jobs in our community could be lost, for which the minister should take full responsibility.

So I ask her: Will she act immediately, or will she delay her decision and roll the dice on the jobs in Powerview and Pine Falls?

Ms. Howard: As I said at the outset, we provided, immediately, a million dollars to that community adjustment committee to look at all of the options, to do the feasibility study. There are jobs at stake. There are the financial future of thousands of community members at stake, and we're going to take the time necessary to make sure that that is protected for people.

I would also remind the member opposite that there has been an issue of retroactive Employment Insurance payments, which he has written a letter on, which I have written a letter on, which the Premier has written a letter on to the federal government. And I would also say that, thanks to the unemployed help centre that is taking that case forward, that is helping those members appeal, I think there is an opportunity here to see some change happen.

But it's interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, that when they had an option to fund the unemployed help centre in 1989, what did they do? They took back that funding immediately. It was one of the first acts of the Filmon government. So we will judge them by what they have done.

Broadband Services Rural Availability

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I commend the Manitoba government for getting information about government services and programs on the government Web site. There's been quite an aggressive shift to direct Manitobans to the government Web page, and the page has become an integral part of the way government is doing business today.

But Mr. Speaker, with this push towards more government business on-line, the Premier has left a large number of Manitobans out in the cold. Many Manitobans in rural and Manitoba—in rural and northern Manitoba still rely on slow dial-up Internet services that can't support the government's Web site, which is heavy in PDF documents and graphics.

Mr. Speaker, many Manitoban communities are still without broadband services, and we now have a two-tiered system of government service.

I ask the Premier: Why, in more than 10 years in his—in the government, has he failed to ensure all communities have broadband access in Manitoba, and why, as a result, do we have two-tiered government services?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I appreciate the question from the member opposite because it is important that modern infrastructure like broadband infrastructure is made available to Manitobans.

And what we have done is when we purchase services from organizations like the Manitoba Telephone System for hospitals and schools, we also try to ensure that those broadband services available to our public institutions are also made available to the surrounding communities, so that they can buy into that and be part of that new technology and develop their businesses and their opportunities to communicate with the rest of the world. We have aggressively pursued that over the last several years. More than 68 percent of Manitobans are never—are now covered under that policy.

* (14:20)

We have worked with community development corporations to provide additional Internet services out through, in some cases, even the dark fibre of Manitoba Hydro in co-operation with the community development corporations.

So we are aggressively looking at ways to expand service to all Manitoba communities. We've worked with First Nations, we've worked with community development communities, and we will continue to do that as we purchase services from the telephone system.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I have to let the Premier know that there are still more than 200 communities without access to broadband services. I table the list.

The government has been slow on broadband and hasn't even presented a target date when all communities in Manitoba will have access to broadband services.

Does the minister recognize that access to broadband services play a major role in providing solid education and health services? All communities need broadband services to anchor important government institutions, such as hospitals and

schools, and to provide equitable access to education, to health care and to economic opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell me why there was no mention of broadband services in his moving Manitoba forward budget plan, and can the minister clearly tell Manitobans with dial-up services when they can expect to receive the same level of government service as their fellow broadband-enabled Manitobans?

Mr. Selinger: As I said, Mr. Speaker, there has been very, very significant progress. In 2004, there were 104 connected communities; in 2006, there was double that—200 connected communities; in 2008, it rose to 255 communities; and last year, it rose an additional 100, to 355 communities. And we have a projection to add approximately another hundred communities in the coming year.

So, every year, there is steady progress being made in connecting up communities to broadband services. We do it in collaboration with the telephone system. We do it in collaboration with First Nations. We do it in collaboration with community development corporations, as well as small businesses out there. And this is the approach we are taking to get a cost-effective solution for more broadband services.

In some other provinces where Crown corporations provide telephone services, it's been somewhat easier to do, Mr. Speaker. We do not have that option any more in Manitoba and the member from River Heights knows the reason why.

Balanced Budget Legislation Ministerial Salary Reductions

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, for three consecutive elections, the Premier campaigned in St. Boniface and, in fact, now, throughout the entire province, that they support balanced budget legislation.

And if I quote right from the balanced budget legislation, Mr. Speaker, it states that, quote, clause 6(1): If the balance at the end of the fiscal year is negative, for the next fiscal year the salary of each minister, including any person appointed as minister in the next year, must be reduced in accordance with subsection 2.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier today is: Has he applied that reduction to his current salary? Has he actually taken a deduction for the months of April, which is under this particular fiscal

year, and will he make the commitment to all Manitobans that all of his ministers will take that 20 percent, or more, reduction not only for this fiscal year, but for the following year—something in which he supported in three consecutive elections, something that he told his constituents he would do?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, under existing balanced budget legislation, the budget is balanced this year under the four-year rolling average. In spite of that, the members of Cabinet have voluntarily taken a 20 percent reduction, and they will continue to receive that reduction until the budget is brought back into balance under our five-year plan, which protects front-line services for health, education, social services and justice, which stimulates job creation to the tune of 29,000 jobs this year, which manages our public expenditure below the thresholds that the members opposite carried when they were in office, and does it while keeping Manitoba affordable.

This is the plan that we will use to grow prosperity in Manitoba, and all the members opposite are going to vote against it, once again, as they do not have their own plan other than cutting everything back.

Green Manitoba Green Building Products Directory

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is internationally recognized as being the most progressive jurisdiction in North America on the issues of the environment and sustainable environmental stewardship.

Our proposal before UNESCO for a World Heritage Site on the east side of Lake Manitoba is globally recognized as the most progressive initiative currently under way in North America, Mr. Speaker. Our work on wind farms, our work on geothermal, on developing Manitoba Hydro places Manitoba at the top of international jurisdictions in providing green initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has seen more housing growth in this province in the last three months than at any time in recent memory.

Can the Minister of Conservation please inform the House today how our government initiative through Green Manitoba will assist in the design and construction of industries to build in a green and sustainable way into the future?

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, the honourable member asked a very appropriate question indeed. Just today, coincidentally, Green Manitoba, in partnership with Manitoba's Canada Green Building Council chapter, launched the Manitoba Green Building Products Directory at the Better Buildings Conference in Winnipeg.

The Green Buildings Products on-line directory will help build a greener Manitoba—something I know honourable members over there are against—by helping industry help the environment. This directory will provide an easy-to-use low-cost way for Manitoba-based green product manufacturers and suppliers to connect with Manitobans who design, construct and operate green buildings. The site will list environmentally preferable building products and materials for the construction, renovation and operation of commercial and institutional buildings, making it much easier for industry to find and incorporate locally available products for green construction projects. Through our Green Building Policy, Manitoba is a national leader incorporating sustainability in its construction and supply-needs planning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Kyle Parrott

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today in the House to congratulate each of Manitoba's Olympic athletes who we'll be meeting later on this afternoon.

The 2010 Olympic Games were an especially notable event to the community of Minnedosa as we cheered on for our very own Minnedosa hometown hero, Kyle Parrott. As for the MLA for Minnedosa, we would like to pay special consideration to my constituent Kyle Parrott who represented not only his home country and home province so capably, but also in his hometown of Minnedosa.

A speed skater, Kyle was one of over 180 Canadian athletes who competed in the Olympic Games in Vancouver this past winter. This young man of 24 years of age began skating competitively when he was 11 years old. While Kyle has most recently been training at the Richmond Olympic Oval, he has humble roots as an alumnus of the Brandon speed-skating club. Kyle qualified to compete as part of the prestigious Canadian speed-skating team after competing in the Canadian Single

Distance Championships and finished third to qualify for the men's 1,500 metre event. He also competed in both the 500 and the 1,000 metre races in Vancouver.

In the last few months, Kyle has become a local and national celebrity featured in the *Toronto Star* and gracing cereal boxes through General Mills' Aspiring Olympians program. This young man's success demonstrates that small rural communities do produce extremely exemplary athletes.

And I want to join all of Kyle's local friends and family to congratulate Kyle on representing our country in Vancouver. The 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games were truly Canada's games and, because of you, they were Minnedosa's games as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dean Garrioch

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, many individuals make positive contributions to their communities but perhaps those that touch the lives of troubled youth create the most impact.

Today, I would like to recognize the efforts of Dean Garrioch, an outstanding man who is dedicated to the well-being of Aboriginal youth. Dean graduated from Eston College, a church-run residential school in Saskatchewan, where he learned the value of community. Since that time, Dean has been arranging recreational weekends for youth that encourage community, culture and education and help teens to deal with challenges and get back on track with their lives.

In February, Dean organized a Challenge to Strive, one of those events in Cross Lake, which I attended with Grand Chief David Harper.

* (14:30)

That weekend, youth discussed the roads to better education, healthier relationships, community participation and holistic well-being. Following this enlightening conversation, we had a floor hockey tournament that promoted competitiveness and good will. While there was still a winner, the main goal was for everybody to get involved and show respect for the rules and opponents. That evening, community members of all ages came together to share experiences of personal challenges, such as gangs, drugs and alcohol, and lack of familial support, and were invited to speak about how they strive to better their lives. At the end of the night, we were all treated to music put on by the young

participants, which was a wonderful opportunity for each other's company and feel the embrace of community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, support systems such as this are especially important, given the high teen suicide rates plaguing many northern communities, and events that unite the community inspire young people to address their problems and be positive forces.

I want to thank Dean and his partners for a steadfast commitment to Aboriginal youth and, as one elder put it, events like this help our youth to succeed and grow old gracefully. Thank you.

Community Newspaper Day

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate Community Newspaper Day in Manitoba. Every year on April 17th, we highlight the central role community newspapers play in local communities. Local and ethnic newspapers bring communities together. These newspapers are an integral part of the fabric of strong communities.

Peter Jennings once said: It is a simple axiom of journalism that the most effective way to connect with your audience is to make your reporting relevant to an individual's daily life.

It would be an understatement to say that community newspapers achieve this. These newspapers are the lifeline of communities. They are the connecting point for what is happening in people's lives in their backyards, in their community centres and schools. Community newspapers play a vital role in the development of the local and provincial economy. They build strong and resilient businesses and community partnerships. In addition, they provide a great opportunity for local businesses to advertise and get involved in the community.

Mr. Speaker, local newspapers bring a sense of belonging and involvement to communities. They offer a public forum for debate on contentious local issues that aren't covered by media anywhere else. They provide editorials on issues that directly affect people's everyday lives.

Today, the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association represents 47 community newspapers that have a combined weekly circulation of over 360,000 households and over 550,000 readers.

Manitoba also boasts many ethnic and cultural newspapers that strengthen the province's

multicultural fabric. These ethnic newspapers enrich our communities and allow them to fully participate in their cultures.

Mr. Speaker, the value of community newspapers was recently confirmed by a study. This study found that 77 percent of Manitobans had read a community newspaper in the past week, compared to 59 percent who had read a daily newspaper.

Mr. Speaker, given the technological and industrial pressures community newspapers are facing today, I encourage all honourable members to support their local newspapers. Thank you.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police— Flin Flon Detachment

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, this April the Flin Flon detachment of the RCMP is celebrating its 75th anniversary, marking Canada's oldest municipal RCMP contract in Canada's history.

Assembled in 1873 by Sir John A. Macdonald, the North-West Mounted Police force, later renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, was initially charged with the task of establishing friendly relations with the Aboriginals of the Prairies and maintaining the peace as settlers arrived, but expanded over time. Prior to 1930, the RCMP attended to the Flin Flon area on an as-needed basis but in 1935 entered the area of municipal policing with its first contract to serve as the police force in Flin Flon.

The work was often arduous and involved a sizable degree of danger. Officers carried out searches for missing persons, rescued injured or starving First Nations people and trappers, enforced game laws, noted weather observations for the meteorological bureau and investigated crimes.

Over the last 75 years, more than 350 RCMP officers have served the residents of Flin Flon and the surrounding area. In July of 1999, the Flin Flon and Cranberry Portage detachments consolidated.

The work of the force has greatly evolved over the years. The RCMP is no longer simply an outside agency contracted to enforce the law in the north, but an organization with roots in the community. Now the force is involved in the daily operations of restorative and alternative justice forums and is a participant in community consultative groups and drug and alcohol awareness events. Officers partner with local interest organizations, schools and

municipal council to address problems such as youth gang activity and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, the anniversary event will be a week-long celebration in August, complete with a pancake breakfast, an historical geocache, afternoon tea and regimental ball. I invite all members of the community to come out and celebrate, and I thank the detachment for all their years of dedicated service. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, the fifth member's statement will go to the official opposition, as previously agreed when they exchanged with one of the independent members.

So the honourable member for Pembina.

AAA Midget Hockey Championship

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): From April 1 to 4, 2010, the Morden Community Centre was home to the AAA Midget Regional Hockey Championship. Teams from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and northern Ontario competed for the opportunity to participate in the Telus Cup, the National AAA Midget Championship. The four teams that were part of this year's tournament were Manitoba's Eastman Selects, Saskatchewan's Notre Dame Hounds, the Thunder Bay Kings from northern Ontario, and the Pembina Valley Hawks were the host team.

I would like to congratulate the Pembina Valley Hawks who beat the Eastman Selects in double overtime in the fifth and deciding game to qualify for the West's regional tournament. Although the Hawks had an outstanding season, they came up one game short of qualifying for the Telus Cup. Pembina Valley lost the final game of the Western Regional Championship to Notre Dame Hounds, who will now advance to the Telus Cup where they will attempt to defend their 2009 title in Québec.

This year's tournament was a huge success, thanks to volunteers who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. In particular, I would like to recognize Jim Mutchinson and the entire executive committee, rather, for all the work that they have done to contribute to this event. There were also numerous parent groups who donated their time to the event and their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that all members of this Legislature will join me in congratulating all of the teams who participated in the AAA Midget West Regional Hockey Tournament in Morden. In particular, I would like to congratulate the Pembina

Valley Hawks on an outstanding season and on becoming the Manitoba AAA Midget Hockey League champions.

The town of Morden has done a tremendous job in hosting this tournament and I thank them for their hard work and dedication. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Estimates sequence for the House, and I believe that you will find, if you canvass the House, that there is an agreement for no vote, no quorum for the next 30 minutes to allow for members that are not speaking to the budget to be able to attend the reception for Manitoba's Olympians in the rotunda.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement for the next 30 minutes for no quorum count and no votes for the next 30 minutes? *[Agreed]*

The Government House Leader, on further House business.

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), and the title of the resolution is Neighbourhoods Alive!

Mr. Speaker: Okay, pursuant to rule 31(8), it's been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Selkirk, and the title of the resolution is Neighbourhoods Alive!

BUDGET DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Okay, now we will move on to orders of the day, resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. McFadyen) in amendment thereto, and the proposed motion of the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) in subamendment thereto, in the name of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), who has 18 minutes remaining.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Just to continue on the debate that we—I was involved with yesterday, I want to continue, and there were a few things that I omitted or, rather, did not get the opportunity to put on record. I also want to talk a little bit about the ag sector and the fact that no mention of it was made in the budget that we heard presented by the minister. Certainly, agriculture is a huge sector within this province and to just go ahead and omit the name, omit anything in reference to agriculture, is not acceptable.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to further talk regarding some of the issues that I have brought up in question period, and that is regarding the promise that was made—and this was in crop insurance—to those producers who had corn and who harvested their corn.

* (14:40)

They were—in fact, that's why they buy insurance, and I indicated to them at the time that—to the minister at the time—that when you buy crop insurance, you hope not to use it. When you buy fire insurance, you hope that you will not have to access the results of it, and so, when insurance is bought by producers, they expect it to be there for them. And so I'm trusting that the minister will continue to look at this and will look at treating everyone fairly and will not penalize those producers who went out there and harvested their crop.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I went through and I indicated and outlined the huge infrastructure deficit that we have in the Pembina constituency. And I mentioned the fact that our schools—we need them badly. We've got many, many hundreds of students in huts. And just to add to that, I'm really disturbed by the fact that, in fact, we're going to be announcing today—that the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) is going to be announcing that one of our schools is going to be delayed for another year because of budget cuts in that area.

Now, it's hard for us to comprehend the fact that, you know, schools will be delayed, our personal care home, Tabor Home, is going to be delayed due to the fact that there's not money out there, and yet, though, somehow, this government can find money for the stadium. Just like that they go and they find \$105 million. Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable. Somehow the priorities are totally mixed up with this government.

So the other part that I mentioned yesterday was the fact of our highways deficit. We've got the deficit in education, we've got the deficit in health care, we've got the deficit in infrastructure and highways. Highway 32 has been something that's been on the drawing boards for the last 12 years and, Mr. Speaker, this government has totally just neglected to deal with the issue. And so I would encourage them to keep this in mind as they look at the expenditures for the coming year. And I know that the members opposite will say, now you're asking for money again. I'm asking for them to prioritize the dollars that they have and to spend them in a proper and in a right way.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot support a budget where we've got \$260 million going to a company in the United States. This is for the wind farm. Pattern Energy is going to be receiving \$260 million. The stadium here is going to be receiving \$150 million. I'm not opposed to the stadium per se, but I am opposed to the fact that the priorities that this government has are wrong.

Then, of course, the one that we continue to talk about is the \$640 million that is going to be spent on the Bipole III, the west side of the province. This would give us numerous personal care homes, numerous schools, and yet, though, we have a government here who looks at that as being something—well, as indicated yesterday, with the personal care homes, right now, we're looking at elder abuse and, obviously, this government doesn't care that some of these areas are being omitted and that the people are going to have to suffer as a result of the decisions that they have made.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank you for the opportunity to put a few comments on the record. Again, to my constituents, for giving me the opportunity to present the issues here. However, I do wish that the government of the day would look at the fastest growing area in Manitoba, rurally, as an area where they do need to invest dollars, where they do need to pay heed to the issues that are out there. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to put a few words on the record of supporting our government's Budget 2010. To begin my speech on this reasonably great budget, I, first of all, like to welcome our newest member from Concordia in the NDP caucus, the gentleman I know since my first election in 2003. A bright young man who has all it takes to be a good member of this Chamber, and I

welcome this youthful member as I see he will contribute greatly to his constituency and to our province.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see the member from Wellington, the first woman of colour to be appointed as a Cabinet minister, displaying our party's ideals and values. I see this as a true symbol of change and honour to people of all colour, religion and origin. The member from Wellington is a real example of humble character and values. She has demonstrated to me that her deep cultural heritage of humbleness in behaviour truly reflect the portfolio she holds as Minister of Culture and Heritage.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that in that part of the world that she comes from, societies did not dwell much on the American dreams to possess tons of material wealth. Rather, they lived to promote human values. All social systems were in line with the global village concept. I know, as I have many Filipino friends who share with me how large families grow together by sharing and caring for each other.

Once again, I congratulate my colleague, member from Wellington, on her appointment as the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and also Minister responsible for Multiculturalism.

Now, talking about this budget, presented by Manitoba's first female Finance Minister who, again, is a courageous, gracious and hardworking woman, Mr. Speaker. I must say, during my stay in this Chamber for the last seven—past seven years I have witnessed our current Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) do her job in the most diligent, humble and dedicated manner, and deliver all what is required by such a responsible position.

One of the most humble and decent women I have met is holding a senior Cabinet portfolio and still delivers everything in the most humble and remarkable way. She went with me to a trip to India and has left a great impression in the minds of few leaders of several provinces of that country. She visited along with me to promote Manitoba agricultural business.

Mr. Speaker, our visit to India, particularly to the state of Bihar, has left a great impression on our province and our agrifood business community. People of Bihar, and particularly farmers of Hajipur, near Patna, were very, very impressed with Madam

Minister of Finance who was the Minister of Agriculture at the time.

Mr. Speaker, during the visit in 2008, we were honoured to be received with warm welcome by Bihar's most successful chief minister, Honourable Nitish Kumar, at his residence on a Sunday evening.

Today I must say the Chief Minister of Bihar, Sri Nitish Kumar, who, by the way, is also an engineering degree holder like myself, have put close to 83 million people of that province on the path of economic self-sustainability and recovery. Bihar is on the international map today. He has led this big state to new heights.

Basically, Mr. Speaker, I see their policy very similar to that of our government in Manitoba. Any progressive leader would see the need to be investing on people and development of the society. Bihar's GDP last year was reported to be India's highest GDP and, Mr. Speaker, 83 million people living in that state thanked the Chief Minister for the great leadership he has demonstrated in building that province from the ruins a few years back that he took the leadership.

This budget offers, Mr. Speaker, a five-year plan which any good management scientist would say this is the right thing to do. It is the blueprint on how to build Manitoba and how to be out of debt in the near future by stimulus economy.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a rocket science to understand the term "stimulus." Every household understands that you cannot say no to your health. You cannot say no to your children's education. You cannot say no to the basic needs of living, and every household needs that they have to build for the future.

So we are trying to do in this government, Mr. Speaker, build infrastructure so that our societies in the future will grow on the economic platform. We have taken that road to move forward and continue the mission of building our province for our children and grandchildren.

* (14:50)

We are building roads. We are building highways. We are building community schools and we are building and developing colleges. We are building the University College of the North in Thompson. I was pleased to learn our Premier (Mr.

Selinger) and the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton), member from Thompson, made announcements of developing new premises for Manitoba's unique college in the—of the north in Thompson. This is needed there. We did it, and we will continue doing such things, Mr. Speaker, as we believe in developing Manitoba north, south—north to south—east, west.

We are holding on this spree of development of infrastructure and creating thousands of jobs in that process. This would facilitate more international investments into Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. I have a new task of being special envoy for international trade for the province. I'm very pleased to see the visionary CentrePort being developed here. It is one of the finest tools needed to promote investment into Manitoba.

I must say, understanding how global businesses operate, it is very important to show to the world and the investment community in real terms of what are the salient features of our province. Why should a business locate to your geographical area? Looking at our assets, I—Mr. Speaker, Manitoba an ideal location for automobile industry and future of transportation industry. We have huge natural resources for growth. One must look beyond the Perimeter and see the vast land in east and west, south and north, of our province and envision big industries flourishing in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I must state I grew up as a child with a dream and a clear vision to build my own future. I recall Mr. Izzy Asper, who once said to me: When I see an empty parcel of land somewhere in the city, I imagine a tall building to be erected there.

We must dream and act to investing on infrastructure. Economies must grow in our province, which has a great, great future, Mr. Speaker.

My vision is to see rural Manitoba attract more international investments in the area of innovation and knowledge-based industries for our people to grow with the economy and have a good quality of life. With our policies on social democracy, health care and education, we are on the path to build a beautiful province, which will be an ideal in this country.

It is not possible for me to explain all in such a short term of time, Mr. Speaker, one particular event: That I met Mr. Ratan Tata, the chairman of Tata Sons Ltd., in Toronto in February this year. Mr. Tata

is a leader that, I must say, that the world admires. He was voted as the second most trusted person in India, the world's largest democracy. He was voted by people—not by the business—people as the second most trusted individual in the whole country of 1.1 billion people. It is very difficult for me to say how Tata has brought the culture of being a socially responsible business leader. And he has been given that stature by people of India, whom he, as a big industry leader, has served. I am honoured to mention that I have worked for Tata after graduating from my engineering university. What an experience for an employer who built hospitals, residences, the schools for their employees and now, but—not now, but several decades back.

I hope that all members of this Chamber, along with me, would love to invite world leaders, such world leaders as Mr. Tata, to visit Manitoba and witness by their own team, how wonderful and good opportunities are available in our beautiful province to grow globally.

Mr. Speaker, we are all—I mean all—members of this Chamber as part of a new revolution to build a better world. As Mahatma Gandhi called the freedom and democracy as a peaceful revolution, a movement to install social justice and universality for all people. It is democracy I'm talking about. It is democracy which is by the people and for the people. I dream to see Canada to be a true symbol of a global village, where all human beings live together like brothers and sisters, live in peace with good health, have equal opportunities and love for each other. That is my dream. I call it Canadian dream. Thank you.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to put some words of record on the budget today in this government's budget, and to show my displeasure and concern about this particular budget as well.

But, before I do that, I just want to do a few formalities, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to invite the new member from Concordia to the Legislature.

And I know that there are a number of our colleagues here in the House today that are out at the day we have to honour our Olympic athletes, and—*[interjection]*—Olympic athletes. And I appreciate the member from Fort Rouge saying that she's listening to me, and I could pass on to her an e-mail that one of her people sent me last night, that I was quite pleased to receive, from a former French teacher,

Mrs. Alice Little, that taught me French in Hartney collegiate, and English as well, a number of years ago. And so it was a pleasure to receive that as well.

But I wanted to say that it's a pleasure to welcome the member from Concordia into the Legislature, and, at some point, as a few of us said to his predecessor, that some time when we're in Washington, we may have the opportunity to see him there as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that I want to thank and—all of the staff in the Legislature, from the Clerks in the Chamber here, to the staff at the security, to everyone else in—that has helped—that helps keep order and keep us—keep the legislative agenda moving in the Legislature. I want to thank them for their time and efforts in this facility as well.

Mr. Speaker, I just referred casually to the Olympians that we are honouring today in the Legislature in the rotunda. And I just want to add my personal congratulations to all of them, not just the Manitoba ones, but also to all Canadian athletes and Paralympic athletes that took part in the Olympics, because I think it was—while there is a cost to these things, it was certainly, I think, a tremendous credit to the country and—I know from being at the Olympics myself personally—was a tremendous opportunity for the city of Vancouver to display, and the province of British Columbia to display their efforts and attractions for people from around the world.

And I recall speaking to people in Alberta, in my farm activity days and farm leadership roles, how important the '88 Olympics were to the beef industry, particularly in the province of Alberta, and speaking with many of those people. And the facilities that are left behind, and the same thing will happen and be garnered in both Whistler and Vancouver for the future of not only our athletes that took part this time, but for training of our youth for these athletic endeavours in the future, Mr. Speaker, not only for Olympics, but also for world events as well.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is historic—and if I could go on into it as well—in that it creates four straight deficits in a row on top of one of the—on top of the largest deficit in the history of this province, a \$602-million shortfall this year, when the government budgeted for a \$2-million surplus. And, of course, spending is not what Manitobans elected the New Democrats for, when they said they would honour balanced budget legislation. And so I've had

many of them in the last few weeks indicate to me that they were certainly be seeking a change in government, as we move forward in the days and weeks to come, in the time that the minister has—in the year and a half that he has indicated that he'll have before the next election on October 4th, 2011.

And I think it falls upon all of us to do what we can to make sure that the accountability—and that this government is held to accountability and to honesty in regards to the integrity of our young people in this province. And maybe integrity is not the right word, Mr. Speaker, but we cannot continue to offload on our future generations the kind of debt repayment that is already present in the proposed budget and what has already happened.

* (15:00)

And I only say that it could get worse because, as even the Bank of Canada has indicated, Mr. Speaker, interest rates cannot go lower. When they're at a quarter of a percent, they're virtually zero anyway. And as we see increases—as we know, throughout history, interest rates have been and can go higher. The increased debt of 1 percent on the amount that this—of the largest debt in Manitoba's history would be around \$237 million, annually, added to the cost of servicing the debt that this province already has.

And I just want to say that I find that horrendous. It is the largest increase in spending in the budget. Although the government said that the increase in spending is in health, 60 percent of their increased spending may be going into health, Mr. Speaker, unlike what the member from Kildonan, I believe it is, indicated the other day when he was in the heat of battle in the House. He indicated that 60 percent of all of their spending was going to health care. Well, it's not quite there yet, but if he's allowed to continue with these kind of deficits, it might get there. It's presently in the neighbourhood of 42 percent and growing, because I know it was 31 percent when I was first elected in 1999, and the government has certainly not improved health care or health-care services.

And I'd just like to refer to a meeting that was held again in Virden last night with Dr. Poff, the president of Brandon University, when she was indicating that there may be changes in needs there for training doctors at Brandon University, Mr. Speaker. And she's wondering, I think, just where the government's at in some of those areas. Certainly the

people of southwest Manitoba were wondering those—where those needs are at today as well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that there are a whole host of areas besides the debt and I—that I want to speak to in this budget today in the budget debate, and our Leader has outlined in his amendment that we put forward from our Progressive Conservative side of the House reasons why we cannot vote for this budget, but I wanted to say that I'd like to just outline a few more in regards to the debt.

One of them is that they are increasing the debt this year by \$2.3 billion to take it to just over \$23 billion, Mr. Speaker. It's about a 10 percent increase and, as I said, the largest increase in Manitoba's history. But that breaks down to a—when you're financing that kind of debt in the neighbourhood of \$780 million a year, and as I said, another 1 percent would be another \$237 million added to that—you're over—almost over a billion dollars just to service the debt in this province of a million—0.2 million—1.2 million people, and that's not just voters or those who are making a living; that's the total population of our province.

So you can tell how many—what that breakdown is on a per-family basis. And, so, for a family of four, Mr. Speaker, it's about 19,000—being about \$19,000 per person, it's about \$76,000 worth of debt for a family of four in this province, and that is without any of the other debts that we may be paying in taxes on our homes to municipal levels or federal taxation, as well.

Just to service the debt in Manitoba is about \$15,000 a minute, Mr. Speaker, and I think—\$1,500 a minute, pardon me, and I don't think that that's acceptable to put on the future generations of Manitobans, to tax them with and burden them with, as they haven't even gone through school yet or haven't even been able to get their college degrees to allow them to get into the workforce or the trades that they may want to take on as well.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are many other issues that we could talk about in regards to the debt and the deficit, and I know one of my colleagues today referred to how this is so similar to what I've said in this House in just about every Throne—or every budget speech that I've ever replied to, and that is that this is not New Democratic programming; this is old democratic programming. This is falling back to the days of Howard Pawley when he recapitalized the deficits of his government into debt, and I know

some of the members in the House won't remember that. They weren't old enough at the time to remember how that impacted the province, this province.

But it is not responsible management to refinance your deficits and recapitalize them into debt every year. Sometimes you can do that and refinance a loan on a mortgage or something like that, but you can't do it every year sustainably. And he did it for four years in a row in the '80s, increasing the debt of the province from 1.4 to 5.2 billion dollars and declared he didn't have any deficits.

The government of today, under the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the member from St. Boniface, who has been the Finance Minister for the last 10 years before this, is doing the same thing, taking the page out of the same area, putting the burden of future deficits, future debt, on the citizens—young citizens of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I hope—and I do see where growth can occur at a rate that it could pay off these types of debts in the future, but it's not going to happen under the policies that are coming forward from this government. They—their tax and increases in fees and service charges in many, many departments, are not what is going to sustain the long-term development of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to—I just want to say, as well, that the debt now being over 23 billion is about \$11 billion more than it was. It's double what it was when I was first entered into this House in the fall of '99. And what have we got for it?

You know, I mean, the government talks a great deal about building, developing, you know, future energy areas. They talk about, you know—I don't think they want to talk about wind energy very much because you know they've just given an American company, I think it was \$260 million was mentioned earlier, to develop something that—from a company that's in financial straits, as well, and that money's leaving Manitoba. It's going out of the province. And, instead of 300 megawatts of power, it's down to 138, I believe. So they've almost cut the program and—certainly, they've cut it further than half, almost a third, and the—instead of accepting some of the other programs that they've had years to look at through Manitoba Hydro, the government, in their wisdom, has to save face politically, said, we're going to develop this and we're going to do it with

\$260 million that we're telling Hydro to give these people to make the development.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's just like saying we're going to take \$110 million and we're going to give it to the football stadium to be built. And, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say how disappointed I am, as well as the member from, I know, Pembina, that just indicated his concerns on this area. We had concerns—and I'm just going to make sure that I get this right on the type of facility that they're expected to build—and, you know, the government is putting up \$90 million for a hundred percent, taxpayer-funded, scaled-down deal for a football stadium.

I have no problem with a new football stadium. I am a true blue Blue Bomber supporter, unlike, I know, the member from Dauphin, the other day who was talking about, in reply to the 2 percent levy that he's putting on dairy and other supply managed commodities in this province, a tax on them to raise food costs across the province, Mr. Speaker, unlike the new Agriculture Minister, the member from Dauphin, who indicated that, in the reply to why he was doing that, said, well, you have to look at Saskatchewan; they just took \$97 million out of their budget in agriculture.

Well, I haven't seen that, Mr. Speaker, but I find it really an oxymoron for the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Struthers) to be standing up, on one hand, saying that he supports a football stadium with taxpayers' money in Manitoba, but he's cheering for the Roughriders in Saskatchewan. And I just find that that's a kind of a contradiction in terms, but that's just about where he's at in all of the policies he's brought forward in this House, whether it was Bill 17, his moratorium on hog barns in the province or whether it was his dealings with waste-water management systems in the province of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that—just to finish off with the football stadium, for a government to fund something like that, if that's what they choose to do, they have the right to do that as a government, with no private money invested in this virtually. They are going to give \$90 million. The University of Manitoba will own half of the building because it's on their land, the City will own the other half and if Mr. Asper—and he is a good businessman, I have no problem with that. He's very sharp. In fact, in this—in fact, any one of us in this House, I think, would have signed the same kind of a deal if we were in that position because the government has already provided him with a way to pay off the \$90 million if

he doesn't. They've already decided that if he can't pay it back, you know, he does have to give up the ownership of the Blue Bomber team, but Mr. Speaker, he'll end up with a development and, hopefully, it will be able to put them all in place, to be able to earn some funds to pay back as well.

But, it's a very lucrative sweetheart deal I would say, Mr. Speaker, for the development, and, I guess, from Creswin's position. And I only say that because, if it is going to be a taxpayer-funded facility, then I totally concur that it should have been publicly tendered so that it can be built, because, of course, there are many other stadiums being built across the country as well.

* (15:10)

Mr. Speaker, there is another issue that I wanted to speak about, and, I guess, when we talk about all of the deficits that this government is projecting down the road, I don't know how they can plan that when they can't plan day to day or they can't organize things, like how to implement the sewage-ejector program in Manitoba or the other programs that we were asking them about in question period today and the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) hasn't got answers for.

There's two that I want to bring to mind in Manitobans. And one of them is in my conservation district area, the Water Stewardship critic responsibilities that I have. And that one would be for the removal of—forcing the Winnipeg taxpayers to remove nitrates from the waste-water treatment facilities, instead of the phosphates only, as told by 63 scientists that it was unnecessary to remove the nitrogen, Mr. Speaker, to the Clean Environment Commission. And yet the government has gone ahead, in their wisdom, and forced the taxpayers of Winnipeg to spend \$350 million that they don't need to spend to remove those nitrates out of that water supply, when the scientists have indicated that they will be returned by nature anyway into those water facilities. That's \$350 million that is unnecessarily being forced on Winnipeg taxpayers and all citizens of Manitoba, because we will pay for some of that infrastructure development no matter where we live.

The other one, of course, is the \$650 million wasted on an environmentally dirtier, longer, more expensive, less habitat-friendly west side Bipole III line—hydro line—to move power from northeastern Manitoba to east of Winnipeg via The Pas and Riding Mountain and virtually west of Portage la Prairie, maybe even Brandon. Who knows where

the government may move—make their final decision to force others to go.

Mr. Speaker, this line has received a great deal of public attention. The waste of this money and the extra 400 kilometres of line that has been put—that has been—that would need to be developed, something in the neighbourhood of 1,350 steel towers that would need to be built that unnecessarily would lead to a more safe line if they didn't need to be built. There would be less vision of—or less opportunity, I should say, for ice storms to take down that extra 400 kilometres of line if this line was built on the east side of Lake Winnipeg in a direct line from the north to the—northeast to the east side of Winnipeg. And, considering that this power is being used to—for export into our United States neighbours in Wisconsin and Minnesota and other jurisdictions, it makes clear sense that we would be able to build it down the east side.

There's also discussions with First Nations people on that side of the line that have indicated that they wouldn't mind having that line come down through their area, if somebody would just give them a plan that they could look at. And, also, there is a road being built up the east side of Lake Winnipeg to Berens River and I—we concur on this side of the House that that type of a road is needed. But, Mr. Speaker, we find it strange that the government can build a road but not a hydro line.

And I'll give you another example of that. And that is the fact that the government also has indicated—and I've been in estimates many times with the minister of highways and infrastructure on this one—they—and it's, well, it's not an irony, Mr. Speaker, I guess it's just sad that they keep coming out with this document every year when they get into trouble with the winter roads that—well, they've—they're proud of the fact that they've moved more winter roads off of the ice and put them onto the land. But, in order to do that, they've had to clear 600 kilometres more trees to put the winter roads in and get them off the ice. Now, I'm all in favour of safety, but you can't have it both ways as the minister—Finance Minister said in the House today in reply to questions as well. And she does every day. She has it both ways.

You can't say that you're going to clear down 600 extra kilometres of line and say you're doing it for safety and to be environmentally friendly. What's environmentally friendly about knocking down 600 kilometres of trees already in the UNESCO

designated area, Mr. Speaker, when they're saying that we can't run a line through that area because we need to keep a pristine boreal forest so we can have a UNESCO designation, maybe have a UNESCO designation? So I think it's incumbent upon the government to rethink the policies that they've got to be more consistent in the decisions that they're making, and that's what members of this side of the House will do when we form a government.

We're much more consistent, we're much more consistent with the policies that we put in place. There'll be some due diligence put in place, there'll be some consultation with people before these kinds of policies are put in place, unlike what the government is doing today, Mr. Speaker.

And I know I've—the members must be feeling a little bit sensitive because I think they know that the Hydro line's the wrong way to go, they know that the waste-water treatment facilities are the wrong way to go, they know that the enhanced identification cards that they've got are a flop in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that nobody wants to use those. They know that taxing supply management to 2 percent to increase food taxes—food costs—to citizens is the wrong way to go.

I don't know why some of their backbenchers aren't standing up and taking the Premier (Mr. Selinger) on, Mr. Speaker, as we have to every day in this House to be accountable. Because these are policies that Manitobans don't want. And I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to development in Manitoba, from the circumstances I've got a number of developments that want to take place in my own constituency.

And the government is dragging their feet. In fact, they're telling them, no, you can't even put a—we've got a—one situation right now where a young farmer wants to build a house on his—on basically their own farmyard site next to highway but they won't give him any kind of access to do it, Mr. Speaker.

They won't allow a development for 10 lots along No. 1 Highway, Mr. Speaker, even though the municipality will build a service road, and no new access would be gained to No. 1 Highway at all. There's a—they're a mile apart; there's a road on the No. 1 Highway every mile anyway, and yet they say, well, it might be too much traffic from these particular venues. We've got high-volume trucks moving oil and grain all over my constituency, right

now, and if you want to talk about growth, it's taking place in southwest Manitoba. I'm proud of that.

These are independent people coming in, businessmen making the decision that they're going to go ahead and invest in southwest Manitoba and we got a government who wants to shut them down, when housing is at extreme shortage. Not just low-cost housing, Mr. Speaker, any kind of housing in southwest Manitoba right now, is at a premium.

Because of the increased activity from not only the oil industry—certainly it's not the growth that we'd like to see in the livestock side and, of course, this government has done nothing to help the livestock industry over the 11 years that I've been in this Legislature.

But, with the growth that's taking place, there are opportunities in Manitoba, and I am the first to recognize that and all I'm saying is that some accountability in those areas would go a long ways to enhancing the development of our region on an even more strengthened basis.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of other areas of road-speaking of the oil industry in our area, there needs to be repairs done on Highway 256. There needs to be policy changes there to allow the traffic to be alleviated off of the gravel PR Road 255.

We've got a situation where farmers are being fined over \$6,000—well, not the farmers, but the truckers hauling heavy loads of grain, Mr. Speaker, on a gravel PR road in 35-degree weather when the road was fully solid and no bridges on the road. And the minister's office knows about it, they've been saying they are going to make changes to this for some time and so we wonder where that's at, as well.

And I think this is just a tax grab. That's certainly what the farmers and the trucking companies in Manitoba—we have the head offices of many of the trucking companies in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and this is what they do to trucking industries. Fine them. Well, we aren't going to tax you but we'll go out and we'll fine the devil out of you so that you can—you have to pay these exorbitant fees and costs of doing business in this province.

Now, these are individuals that have told me and I know that they would not—they want to comply with road restrictions, Mr. Speaker. They've indicated that in a letter to the minister; they're not trying to get away with anything. Their trucks were loaded virtually identical to what they would need to

be for the paved roads that they would have go to, Mr. Speaker.

But on this particular gravel PR road, these individuals were fined by, I think, an overzealous road inspector at that particular time. But I don't blame him. I blame the government for the direction that they've provided some of these people. They're so short of money they tell them to go out and get it wherever you can in your departments. Not only was there cutbacks in those departments but you've got to collect more fees, to earn your right to be here. And I think that's the wrong way to go for development in this province. Certainly the wrong message.

* (15:20)

Other areas that need attention are in that area of heavy activity right now from the west end of Turtle Mountain all the way to the Saskatchewan border in the southwest corner of the R.M.s of Brandon, Arthur and others have asked for an indication from the government that they can get help with some of the roads that are being beaten in that area just because of the traffic.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And, fortunately, it is a bit of a drier spring out there, Mr. Acting Speaker, and so the roads are in probably better shape than they would be if there was ditches full of water there.

But this government has given no indication of how they're going to help the infrastructure development so that those industries can more easily succeed and continue to develop economic returns for the province of Manitoba. Because let—make no question about it, the government is getting a benefit—a tax benefit and an investment benefit—from all of these industries that are taking place and from the people that have come in from out of province to not only work, but to invest in our province in those areas.

And so, Mr. Acting Speaker, the last area that—well, there's other areas too—but one of the major ones is the International Peace Gardens. We've got the second largest trading in the border at Boissevain, south of Boissevain, by the International Peace Gardens on No. 10 Highway. And that road is in poor shape all the way from the U.S. border to the north side of Morton municipality, right through the town of Boissevain—the beautiful town of Boissevain, that also just won an award through the

Good Roads Association again yesterday, for its beautification as well.

And I think that this is a truly indicative indication of the types of ingenuity of the people in southwestern Manitoban that I have the opportunity to represent. And I commend them every day and thank them for the opportunity of allowing me to do that in this Legislature. And I just, you know, wish that the budget that's come forward from this government had a more clear picture of how it was going to provide a sustainable opportunity in the future for our young citizens in the province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the—in closing, I just want to say that the waste-water management situation, with waste-water ejectors in the province of Manitoba, is another horrendous decision of the minister, now of Agriculture, when he was formerly Conservation Minister (Mr. Struthers). I've raised the situation of the reeve of Sifton municipality—Mr. and Mrs. George Harrison and his situation—where his letter to the minister indicated it would cost him \$40,000 just to change the two homes in his area. He and his wife live in one and his daughter and son-in-law live in the other. They are selling their land. They want to subdivide the region—their house, their farm site. And they want to continue to live there as they have all of their lives in their retirement. And this government's saying, no, we're going to tax you to the tune of \$40,000 to have you stay there in the future.

I know my colleagues have raised other personal circumstances and situations from others affected by this across the province. I've even got a situation, Mr. Acting Speaker, where a couple in the province, in my situation, have been living together for a number of years and so they decided that they both should be on the land titles. They're not going to change anything. They've got an ejector system at the present time. And just because she was added to the land titles, and it goes through Land Titles in the ownership, they now have to pay 20, 25,000 dollars to put a sewage field in. Nothing has changed. So I urge the minister to quickly move forward with the changes that he's talking about making.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, with those few words, I'd like to wrap up my comments today in the Legislature on this horrendous bill, or the budget, that they've got before us and look forward to the days when our party will lead the province of Manitoba into a much better opportunity, be much more accountable in its spending in these areas and

provide sound financial management and growth in our social programming for this province. Thank you.

Ms. Erin Selby (Southdale): I stand today, Mr. Acting Speaker, to support our budget as originally presented by the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) and not the amendments.

Mr. Acting Speaker, let me start by welcoming the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) to the House. I know how hard he worked to be here. He deserves it. And I know how hard he'll work for his constituents as well.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I'd also like to take a moment to thank the Minister of Family Services and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Mackintosh). He is a modest man and so he'll probably appreciate if I keep this brief. But I do want to say, however, that I feel very lucky to work alongside him as his legislative assistant. He is a brilliant man and a patient mentor, and I do my best to live up to that responsibility. But I have much to learn, and I thank him for sharing his experience and knowledge with me.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of Family Services has also asked me to take part in the planning for Family Choices, our plan for child care in Manitoba. And this past Friday I was with him at one of the announcements. Our government committed to eight new child-care centres this year. We're on our way to 35 new sites by 2013 and, with eight more, we're now well on our way with 29 new centres since Family Choices began. We promise 6,500 more funded day-care spaces by the year 2013, and we'll see 650 of those this year.

Last year, we added 500 newly funded spaces, and in 2008 we added 2,350. And we've been listening, Mr. Acting Speaker, to child-care workers who've been asking for greater work-force stability. We've answered that call with a pension plan for child-care workers, the first province-wide plan outside of Québec, and it'll be launched this fall.

But I think the piece that I'm most excited about, Mr. Acting Speaker, is the centralized on-line wait list. Phase 1 will launch in Brandon this fall and across the province next year. We know how busy parents are and this will streamline the process for them. Parents will be able to register for as many day cares as they choose all at once. And once they find a day care they can remain on the list of another preferred day care if they wish, or they can move or

change their contact information with one update instead of having to call several day cares.

And I think the best part is that we, as a government, will be able to target those areas in need. We'll have an accurate idea of who's using day care and where, if any, there are any shortfalls. It's more efficient for parents, takes the burden of maintaining lists off child-care centres and it will enable us to better focus child-care spending where it's most needed.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm lucky enough to be the legislative assistant to two ministers; I'm also the LA to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino). In the minister's speech yesterday, she mentioned being the first woman of colour to hold a Cabinet position in Manitoba and, although I knew that, the weight of her words hit me yesterday when she said that. I think all members of this House recognize that we have a responsibility in being role models, and perhaps that's especially true to those of us who are women. But think of how this Minister of Culture will inspire our youth and those young people who are new to our country.

I'm proud that Manitobans can see themselves reflected in our caucus and our Cabinet and I'm also really glad that the minister has such a full schedule, and has to occasionally pass along tickets to me for some of our city's world-class cultural events, something I'm very grateful for.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I was pleased to be present for a delegation before caucus from the Manitoba Arts Council. The council shared with us some of the projects they've been a part of and congratulated us on our support for the arts. Manitobans are spoiled for choice when it comes to arts in this province. Cities larger than Winnipeg don't offer the choice or calibre of talent coming out of this place. And I think it's important we all remember what a strong economic driver the arts are in this province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, government is about choices, what to spend on and where to save. And although we as a government are tasked with making those decisions, they're not made in isolation. No, this NDP government did what we always do. We listened.

And here's what we heard: Manitobans asked us to protect vital front-line services, and not just to maintain the status quo; Manitobans want us to continue investing in their health-care system, their education; Manitobans want us to continue

supporting their police force and to provide support to all families but especially those that are vulnerable.

Our health-care system is easy to take for granted until you need it, and Manitobans have told us that it is their No. 1 priority. It is for us, too. And that's why Budget 2010 invests 60 percent of all new spending in health care. Well, you're wondering how does some of that break down? Well, let me tell you a few of the highlights.

We'll see more doctors in training, with support for a third intake of 110 new medical students. We'll provide additional support to Brandon University for nurses training to become registered psychiatric nurses. The nursing diploma program at Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface will become an accelerated program and we'll see students from southern Manitoba train in the University College of the North midwifery program.

Budget 2010 also makes—continues making capital investments in Manitoba, and things such as the ongoing construction of a regional cancer centre, and redevelopment of the Westman lab in Brandon. We'll continue investing to build on a centre for cardiac—excellence for cardiac heart surgery and cardiac care at St. Boniface Hospital, as well as the launch of the construction of the mental health crisis response centre in Winnipeg. Not only will this be the first of its kind in Canada, patients needing this kind of specialized medical help will benefit from having the right team in place, and it will free up space in other emergency rooms better equipped to deal with other medical needs.

* (15:30)

Mr. Acting Speaker, the opposition may hoot and holler about us spending money on a health-care system. We know they would make different choices. We know that they did. But Manitobans have told us clearly, loudly, and overwhelmingly in the last three elections that health care is their No. 1 priority, and we're listening.

Our teachers work hard every day. Those who've ever felt tired after hosting their child's birthday party should imagine having to do that every day, and usually with more kids. I have a great respect for the people who spend their days nurturing our children. It is the most important thing we can do for our future. Beyond elementary school and high school, I think most of us hope that our children will continue with a higher level of education and

learning, and that's why we've made the choice to support education in this province, but it is a choice, Mr. Acting Speaker, it means that the budgets of one half of all government departments have decreased. We've saved in those areas so we can spend in the places that Manitobans have asked us to, and that's why you'll note that budget 2010 has an 11 percent increase in education spending. We know that spending on children and their future is the right thing to do, but spending money on educating people, either people for jobs now or jobs in the future, also makes good economic sense.

Very few people buy a house without a mortgage. A mortgage is considered good debt, though, because you're paying it off. It increases in value as you do so, and that's the thing about investing in infrastructure. We all know that buying a house—and our banks agree with us—is a good investment, and we're doing the same thing here in Manitoba, stimulating the economy by investing \$1.8 billion in infrastructure stimulus. Not only is that a good investment for the future of Manitoba but it'll help nearly 30,000 Manitobans find jobs. And do you know what 30,000 Manitobans who are working do? That's right, they're going to invest in our economy. Some of them will even buy houses. Their bankers will suggest that they run a mortgage and those people are going to buy homes in Manitoba because they know that Manitoba is among the top three provinces in the country for affordability.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to spend some more time talking about what this government is doing to stimulate the economy. I've already mentioned the \$1.8 billion we're investing in infrastructure, but we're investing \$4 billion on highways because when you can keep Manitobans moving and keep their products moving, you support business and our economy, and some of those investments will go to an all-weather road to bring goods to isolated communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, a road that will move goods and people, and it flows both ways.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I hear members opposite suggest naively that we should build Bipole III along this all-weather road. I suspect they haven't really studied a map of Manitoba, and I think if they did, they would notice that our hydro-electric sales go to the south of us and that the communities along the east side don't line up quite as neatly. The roads will have to meet the communities, which will mean it will twist and turn and veer to the side as need be. I also want to remind members opposite that people

living on the east side, people who have a history on the east side, have told us what they want with their land. They want an all-weather road. They want the economic benefits that it will bring. They also want the UNESCO heritage site so that the entire world will know and visit the area that they have done so well in protecting. The east side of Lake Winnipeg is an area we should be proud of.

And, while I'm on the subject, let me say something else as well. Members opposite seem to think you can balance the budget by reversing the Bipole III routing decision. Mr. Acting Speaker, that's just not true. Bipole III will be paid for by Manitoba Hydro's export customers, the ones who are planning to buy \$20 billion in power from Manitoba over the next two decades. And if we don't build Bipole III, we'll lose that money, and I don't know why members opposite are so keen to throw away \$20 billion in export sales. Why are they rolling the dice on Manitoba's future, and cancelling a project that doesn't start for two years isn't going to make a difference on this budget?

I've spoken about some of the investments this government will make, but I also want to talk about those other choices. I remember the day my husband sold his motorcycle to buy a minivan. I remember it because he talks about it all the time. He had a motorcycle. I had a Montréal Metro pass and a bicycle, and it was all we needed in Montréal at the time until our three daughters came along all at once. And then we bought a minivan because we needed it. It was essential for getting our girls to appointments with the pediatrician, for buying groceries and for getting around the large city of Montréal. But buying a minivan meant not spending on other things, like going out to dinners or movies. We spent on the essentials and we cut back where we could.

And, when the recession hit, governments around the world had to decide what they were going to spend on. Many, like our federal government, made the same choices we did here in Manitoba, to spend stimulus money on infrastructure. We've reduced spending in many departments, so that they continue to support those things that Manitobans have asked us to protect: health care, education and training, policing and support for families.

For the past decade Manitoba has seen the second lowest per capita spending growth in Canada, and, over the next five years, core government spending growth will be limited to an annual average of less than 2 percent. New spending will go where

Manitobans have asked us to put it, to front-line services.

Manitoba has not been immune to the global recession, and, while we fared better than most, it's important to address the shortfall. We will reduce this budget deficit by one-third within the first three years of the plan. We'll dedicate 600 million from the rainy day fund to keep paying down the principal and interest on the debt incurred because of the economic downturn.

And, to ensure that we meet that commitment, we'll bring in legislation that requires budget shortfall to be eliminated over the next four years, with a return to a surplus in year five. We will keep and maintain legal requirements to meet balanced budgets in the future, and we'll pay down our debt more aggressively than the law currently says we have to. And we will retain restrictions that prohibit an increase to major taxes without a referendum, because, while we choose to protect those essential front-line services that matter to Manitobans, we also know they expect us to be prudent in our spending.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we chose to run a debt this year. We know that Manitobans would prefer us to manage the global recession over five years rather than absorbing it all in one year. We could have balanced the budget this year. We could have cut the number of people we're going to train to be doctors. We could have chosen to lay off nurses. We could decide our children don't deserve the best and we could cut back on teachers and education spending and, by that, choose not to run a deficit. That's what members opposite would like us to do, and we know that's what they did. But, instead, we're building schools in Steinbach, Winkler and La Broquerie. Manitobans have seen what it looks like when a government doesn't protect its essential services and they understand that finding balance and running a deficit, it means saving those services.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I chose to move back home to Manitoba. I chose to raise my family here, and it seems more and more people are making that same choice. We've seen unprecedented numbers of people choosing to make Manitoba the place they live, work and thrive. Could it be because of our low cost of living or our high standard of life?

And, while the neighbours to the west of us credit us with a lower cost of living than in Saskatchewan, I think it's because of the people here. I've had the opportunity to visit many parts of Manitoba since being elected and, I have to say, I

don't always recognize the Manitoba that members opposite describe. I hear them—to hear them talk in the House, you might wonder what life is like in their communities. Well, I can tell you. I've been out to visit the member for Emerson's (Mr. Graydon) area. My friends out east would not believe me if I told them that you could find a contemporary world-class art gallery in a field of sunflowers in Altona, Manitoba. I've also visited the member for Pembina's (Mr. Dyck) area as well. I saw many new Canadians who've chosen his constituency as their home. Business out there have been growing, and, while many Winnipeggers head to the cottage at this time of year, I head to Pinawa in the member for Lac du Bonnet's (Mr. Hawranik) constituency. Pinawa is my home town, and I'm lucky my parents are still there. There's something else there, another change since I was a kid growing up in Pinawa, a whole smunch—a whole bunch, rather—of small business owners. In fact, my old elementary school is a business centre now. A town the size of Pinawa has a business centre and an industrial park. And I don't have to tell anyone here how many people flock to the Whiteshell for both summer and winter recreation. Even the grocery store in Pinawa has been upgraded, and the hospital there is first class.

* (15:40)

Mr. Acting Speaker, when I travel Manitoba I meet the most enterprising, optimistic and friendly people around. And I would hate for someone to just hear members opposite speak in the House and not realize what a truly special place we live in, and I wouldn't choose to be anywhere else. Thank you.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Acting Speaker, I would, too, like to congratulate the member from Concordia on the by-election victory that he just went through in Concordia, and I wish him well. I know that all of us in this House, we get elected for various reasons in terms of our personal reasons for running, first of all, and, secondly, for reasons why we want to be here in this House, to try to make a difference. And I think, as members of the Legislative Assembly, I don't think there's any denying that every member of this House ran for different reasons, but they all want to try to make a difference to their community and to our province.

Sometimes, though, it gets very heated in this House because of the differences in terms of how we approach it, you know, in terms of trying to make a difference in Manitoba and trying to make a difference for Manitobans. We have different

political ideologies and we have different approaches, and—but there's no denying that we all want to do the same for all Manitobans. It's just the approach. There's a difference in the approach.

This budget, Mr. Acting Speaker, is really all about debt, and when I look at the debt numbers that are in this budget, the province's total debt is projected at the end of this year to go up to \$23.42 billion. That's up by almost \$2.3 billion in one single year. That's the highest increase in debt in one year in Manitoba's history—the highest increase in debt in Manitoba's history. It's unbelievable. The—when I look at the total debt—and that's the debt that I would like to focus on, because the reality is there are other debt numbers within that budget, one of which is called the net debt, but that's not a fair number to look at in terms of where the province is financially, because of the fact that you have to take all the assets of the province, including the building here, this Legislative Building, and take away all the liabilities, and that gives you the net debt. Well, the reality is is that we're not going to be selling the legislative buildings. We're not going to be selling government land. We're not going to be selling government assets in order to pay down the debt. So the reality is net debt is not a true reflection of the financial health of our province.

And so we have to look at the total debt. That's the most important debt number within the budget, because of the fact that we pay interest on the total debt. We pay interest on the net debt as well, but the reality is is the interest numbers in the budget, in terms of how much we pay in the budget out of general revenues to service the debt, is as a result of the interest that accumulates on the total debt. So that's the most important number, I believe, in the budget, and, of course, the total debt also includes any debt incurred by Manitoba Hydro and other Crown corporations as well.

And it's important to include all of that, because I heard members opposite say, well, you know, it's not important that Manitoba Hydro borrows money, because Manitoba Hydro ratepayers pay the interest on that debt. Well, the reality is there's only one taxpayer here in this province, and that taxpayer has to pay enough money to pay the interest not only on the net debt of the province, the operating debt of the province, but also the total debt of the province, which includes Manitoba Hydro.

There's only one taxpayer. That's the reality and that's why we have to look at the total debt. We have

to take a look at all of the assets across the province to determine where our liabilities are, where our assets are, and where the financial picture of the province is.

The total debt, as I indicated, is more than \$23 billion this year, so any increase in interest rates will have a substantially negative effect on our ability to be able to provide services in this province. If you increase the interest rates by 1 percent, it will add \$230 million more every year to expenses of government, and \$230 million is a lot of money, Mr. Acting Speaker. It's enough to run several government departments for the year.

And a 1 percent increase in interest rates, certainly, is not out of the picture. We've heard various economists forecast that, in fact, optimistically, interest rates by this time next year will be at least 1 percent higher and, pessimistically, up to 3 percent higher. That's going to have a substantial effect on our ability to be able to continue to offer services to Manitobans. That's why the debt is critically important. It's a critically important factor to look at when criticizing or voting for or against budgets, and this budget has increased the total debt by more than any other budget has in the history of the province in one single year.

This affects our future programming, and I notice that in the budget, as well, there is a promise to pay-repay the debt by using up to \$600 million out of the rainy day fund for the next three years. The reality is we're—it's all smoke and mirrors, Mr. Acting Speaker. They're taking 60–\$600 million out of the rainy day fund, at the same time adding \$2.3 billion in this single year. The reality is the debt is not getting paid down; the reality is the numbers are increasing, and our debt is increasing at an alarming rate.

Unfortunately, what's happened by this government is that they've been elected since 1999, and during that time, there's been good economic times around the world. In fact, in North America, it's been particularly good, and it's easy to govern in good times, Mr. Acting Speaker, but, unfortunately, the government did not take advantage of those good economic times by paying down the debt and controlling their spending.

Had they done that, we probably would have had a debt that was 5 or 6 billion dollars less than it is today. And that's reality. I'm not sure when this government will get the message in terms of when to

pay down the debt. During good times, debt was being added to in this province. When times got tough, they continued to add debt in this province. So they're—I don't believe that Manitobans run their household this way, and I don't believe that government should either.

Yet another interesting comment that I heard during the budget debate, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that I've heard several members opposite indicate that, well, the government of Alberta is running a deficit. Well, the reality is, is that the government of Alberta has a rainy day fund of \$15 billion; \$15 billion built up in it. This year, they're projected to run a \$5-billion deficit, but they actually called it a deficit in spite of the fact that they took \$5 billion out of the rainy day fund to pay it to zero. Just like the Finance Minister and today's Premier (Mr. Selinger) did several times over the last few years. He took money out of the rainy day fund to balance the budget and then call it a balanced budget. Alberta, though, called it a deficit in spite of doing exactly the same thing.

So the reality is, is that we are in a very poor financial situation here in this province and by adding to the debt, all we're doing is extending the problem to future generations, future Manitobans who have to pay it back. We—in addition to that, we've had a dependency, an increased dependency on transfer payments from the federal government and that certainly can't be good. Provinces do not get increases in federal transfer payments because they're doing well economically. The reality is is that the federal government does bring money to the province because they're not doing well in relation to other provinces in the country.

A concern for rural Manitoba, in particular, is that when you look through the budget document itself, the word "agriculture" doesn't even appear once in the budget speech itself, although, admittedly, there are a few references to matters related to agriculture. However, it's a bad approach considering the significance of the agricultural sector to our provincial economy. One out of every nine jobs in Manitoba is tied in some way to the agricultural sector in this province.

* (15:50)

We—departmental expenditures in agriculture has been reduced by 4.2 percent. Agriculture producers, particularly those in the livestock sector, have come through some of the most economically challenging years in recent memory. And what did Budget 2010

bring for producers? Not way in much—way in the much of new initiatives, just simply recycling old announcements.

However, what it did contain, Mr. Acting Speaker, is an increase in expenses for our farmers. It contains nearly \$500,000 in fee changes related to the Department of Agriculture, including increases related to the levy for producers on the exchange and transfer of the value of quotas, pesticide and fertilizer licences and Crown land lease rental fees.

So these are some of the highlights—or lowlights, as I would call them—of the budget, in particular, relating to rural Manitoba and the agricultural sector here in this province.

There are a number of concerns that I have in this budget related to the constituency of Lac du Bonnet itself. I know that there are a number of roads—Highway 304, which I continuously bring up in this House, Highway 520, 313, No. 11—in fact, you can even pick any number out in the province and you'll probably find a highway that needs repair.

And I know that the members opposite continue to say they spend more money on repairs and resurfacing highways, but the reality is, as I've been here eight years now, Mr. Acting Speaker, I've been eight years—been calling for the improvement of roads within the constituency and very little has been done. It's easy to stand up in the House and say we spend more money on roads. The reality is, as the Lac du Bonnet constituency has seen very little of it. And certainly, within eight years, eight years of budgets since I've been here, there should have been more done to the infrastructure of the constituency.

In particular, Highway 304, as it proceeds south from Powerview, down toward Highway 59, as it proceeds south, it traverses through a lot swampy areas, it has no shoulders, it cuts through rock outcroppings. It's a very dangerous road. Usually every couple of years there's very serious accidents on this road, and that road needs to be redone. And I know that there has been several instances where constituents have phoned me up and said, well, it looks like there's some activity on the road—Highway 304. And we created some issues with Highway 304 about five or six years ago; the provincial Department of Transportation came out and they came to the community and gave them a presentation indicating that, yes, here are several alternatives as to where the road could be reconstructed. Residents were very excited about that. They thought that

something was going to happen. They waited a year, two years, three years. Every time someone complained about Provincial Road 304, it seemed like the Department of Transportation sent out another crew of surveyors. Well, the reality is, as sending out a crew of surveyors once or twice a year isn't going to get that road built. What's going to get the road built is a commitment from the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton) that that road is a priority and needs to be reconstructed.

Highway 520, from Pinawa to the Lee River—Pinawa has a district hospital, a regional hospital that is an important hospital within our area. It services the Lac du Bonnet area and one of the most direct routes to that hospital is Provincial Road 520 as it comes from the Lee River area to Pinawa, and that road is a nightmare in the spring, in particular, in the fall and when it's raining. And we've had ambulances travel 15, 20, 30 miles out of the way just to avoid Highway 520 because it was in such poor condition. That road, too, needs to be reconstructed.

Highway 313—I had a number of questions from constituents. In fact, a few days ago, about Highway 313, as it goes to Pointe du Bois to service the community of Pointe du Bois, as well as servicing the hydro-electric facility in Pointe du Bois. And they indicate to me that the condition of that road seems to be getting progressively worse. And I would agree with them, because I've been down Highway 313 at least once every two weeks over the last eight years, and I can tell the Minister of Transportation that, in fact, these constituents are correct.

Highway No. 11, as it goes from Lac du Bonnet to Powerview-Pine Falls—again, it's deteriorating in condition. It's a busy highway and, as I indicated before, there are other highways within the constituency that need work, but those five, in particular, are likely the worst roads that we have in the constituency and need to be taken care of and looked after, or else it's going to be—they're going to be a safety hazard.

Another few things that are needed in the constituency are personal care home space. And I know in certain areas of Manitoba, there may be a—more personal care home space than is required. But in our constituency, and Lac du Bonnet in particular, I can tell you that the waiting lists for personal care home space are the longest within the constituency, and that community has been waiting for an

extension in addition to their personal care home for a few years already.

Many of the residents—resident—elderly residents, when they become ill, they want to stay in their own community. They don't want to be in another community away from supports, whether it's family or whether it's friends. They want to be within their own community. And Lac du Bonnet has been waiting for some time now for an expansion—as I have, too—and I've talked to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) with regard to it. She says it's a priority. I'll have to take her word on that and hope that she lives up to that obligation and ensures that there is an expansion to the personal care home in Lac du Bonnet.

Powerview and Pine Falls, much the same, a personal care which has a long waiting list. And I know that a number of residents of Powerview-Pine Falls have had to travel to other communities in order to receive personal care home service.

Pinawa, as well, looking for a personal care home. They have a hospital, of course, but in order for it to keep community residents there—and they're—almost without exception, I've never heard anyone who lives in Pinawa who doesn't love living there. They want to stay within their community—it's a beautiful community—and one way of doing that is to at least add a—some personal care home beds in Pinawa.

These are some of the concerns that come forward almost every year, Mr. Acting Speaker. They're concerns by constituents. And I know that there are challenges in terms of trying to find enough money in order to deal with issues that are sprouting up all across the province, not just in the Lac du Bonnet constituency. I acknowledge that. I have no doubt that there are concerns in other areas as well, but these are concerns within the constituency. These are the concerns that my constituents have identified to me and which I regard as a priority. There are many others, of course, but the reality is that, in terms of—I want to narrow the focus—in terms of what our needs are, in particular with respect to roads, to look at those that are really of a safety concern and ensure that the minister knows where I am in terms of the priorities that I would have within the constituency in terms of services.

With those few words, Mr. Acting Speaker, I know that there are other members who also would

like to speak to the budget motion, and I look forward to the vote tomorrow on the main budget motion. Thank you.

Ms. Marilyn Brick (St. Norbert): Mr. Acting Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to outline why I'm supporting Budget 2010. With the global economy undergoing many changes, our province needs a long-term plan to address the challenges we are facing and to ensure that we move forward with an action plan that sees us through these difficult times. I believe Budget 2010 represents that long-term vision. It ensures that we invest in front-line services, stimulates economic growth, manages government spending and keeps Manitoba affordable, while ensuring that we return to a surplus budget position within a five-year time frame.

Mr. Acting Speaker, prior to talking about the budget, I want to take this opportunity to thank the residents of St. Norbert for the support they have shown me in my two terms in office. I'm very proud to serve them and to work hard every day on their behalf. During my seven years as being a member of the Legislative Assembly, I have endeavoured to make use of the skills I developed in my previous work life, to enhance the liveability of my communities for the residents of St. Norbert and Fort Richmond.

We as MLAs are privileged to get the chance to serve our communities in a job that brings with it great honour and great expectations. This is a job that is held in high regard by many Manitobans. I want to thank the communities of St. Norbert and Fort Richmond for the trust they have bestowed in me and the willingness they have showed to work with me on projects that make a difference in their lives.

* (16:00)

Prior to beginning my address on the budget, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome our newest member to the Legislative Assembly. I want to congratulate the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) on his election to the Legislative Assembly and which—wish him much success in his new position. I listened with attention to his first speech and I enjoyed hearing about his past involvement with community organizations and his passion for the constituency he represents. I had the pleasure of canvassing with him and I can tell from that experience that he is a dedicated, energetic and very enthusiastic individual.

As we all know, these are important traits for any MLA and they will undoubtedly work in his favour in the future. It goes without saying that these traits will also work in his constituents' favour. I welcome him to our caucus; I know he will be a great addition to our team.

I want to also congratulate our new Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) on weathering the stormy waters of her new job and successfully introducing her first budget. Our new Minister for Finance is the first woman to hold this post in Manitoba. She brings to her position a wealth of experience she gained in the past decade as the Minister of Agriculture. She proved her ability as minister when she served in the Agriculture portfolio where she rose to the challenges of BSE, and managed to work through the difficulties of country-of-origin labelling. She proved herself adept at managing these challenges and, with the introduction of her first budget, she has shown that she is carrying forward with the positive and straightforward approach she's set as the Minister of Agriculture. I wish her much success in her new job.

Budget 2010, introduced by the Minister of Finance, provides a five-year economic plan to address the challenges our province is facing. As I reviewed my previous budget speeches, I was reminded that this current fiscal situation we are facing was generated by the banks and mortgage lending companies in the United States. The changes in the global financial market began in 2008 and, like a rock dropping into a pond, the effects have taken awhile to be felt by the people around the world. The analogy to a rock dropping in a pond is also relevant, as many areas of the world have been affected by the ripples as they've moved out to engulf everyone.

Our country is a major trading partner to the United States and we are feeling the effects of the slowing of the world economies. Since October 2008, Canada has lost 260,000 jobs in what is now being called the worst global recession since the end of the Second World War.

Last year, our province faced several unexpected events such as the H1N1 flu and the second largest flood in over 100 years. Dealing with these events produced unexpected costs that resulted in our province expending a substantial amount of money that was not part of the original 2009 budget. Our government knows that you cannot foresee every expense but the protection of people's health stays paramount to us.

Manitoba has a stable economy, but we are feeling the effects of the changes in the financial market. I am very pleased that our government is moving forward with a fair and reasonable approach to address the challenges of this recession and to institute a long-term plan of budgeting for the province's finances.

This budget provides a summary shortfall of \$545 million and includes projected expenditures in core government departments, Crown corporations and pension obligations. We have a long-range plan that will see us return to a surplus budget within five years, thereby allowing us to preserve the key services that Manitobans value. With this budget, we have put together a good plan that will bring us out of deficit in a measured and effective way. This budget is what the current times require and addresses the wishes of the people of Manitoba as they identified to us in our budget consultations.

One of the key commitments in this budget is our commitment to invest in vital front-line services. We're going to ensure we continue to improve health care, education, training, policing and supports for families. In particular, Manitobans have told us that the provision of health-care services is very important to them and their families. Our government will ensure we add additional funding to train more doctors and nurses. There are now 345 more doctors in Manitoba than there were in 1999, including 148 more specialists. In the 2007 election, unlike the members on the other side of the House, we committed to hire 100 more doctors over this mandate.

It is great to see that for the third straight year we are welcoming the biggest medical school ever at 110 students. A newspaper article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on March 10th, 2010, identified that 62 of 100 University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine students, set to graduate after their four-year program, plan to finish their post-graduate training here in Manitoba. This number is up from 52 students last year.

The associate dean of the U of M's post-graduate medical program, Dr. Ira Ripstein, addressed the reason why this is important when he said that where students complete their residency training is the best predictor of where they will eventually practise. This obviously bodes well for Manitoban. More home-trained doctors will be helpful in the future when we are looking to place new doctors in Manitoba. Dr. Ripstein also said that local graduates filled all

15 of the training positions in northern and remote Manitoba, while nine students will train in family medicine in rural areas and 25 graduates were matched to family medicine here in Manitoba.

In addition to ensuring we have people who are trained to work in our hospitals, we are also ensuring that capital investments are being made in our health-care system. On January 21st, 2010, we announced that we are investing \$3.5 million in building a free-standing birth centre in south Winnipeg to support pregnancy, birth and infant health care, including breastfeeding. The birth centre is expected to support up to 500 births per year. The new facility will also play host to other programs, like prenatal education, counselling, newborn infant drop-in, breastfeeding support and parenting groups, in addition to providing space for births that are straightforward and uncomplicated and those births that are assisted by midwives and their colleagues.

In addition to this announcement about a new birthing centre, our government announced on March 26th, 2009, that we will be moving farther along to address the changes requested by the Emergency Care Task Force. Winnipeg hospitals are hiring people to fill 45 new positions to add additional nursing staff at Concordia Hospital, Grace Hospital, St. Boniface Hospital, Seven Oaks hospital, Victoria hospital and the Health Sciences Centre. A pilot program that added community service workers at the Health Sciences Centre to ensure the needs of homeless people and those suffering from mental illness are being met is becoming a permanent program.

Also very important to my constituents is the provision of services they receive at the Victoria General Hospital. Victoria General Hospital is a 231-bed community hospital and employs 1,200 staff and has 350 volunteers helping to provide services. In my constituency the redevelopment of the emergency department at the Victoria General Hospital is key to the quality of life in my community. Construction of the new emergency department began this spring and will be continuing in 2010.

Many of my constituents are looking forward with anticipation to the opening of the new emergency facilities at the little hospital with the big heart, as it's known in my community. The construction of the new emergency department is part of a series of redevelopment projects at the hospital that includes the recently open Buhler

cancer treatment centre, which is a huge improvement on the previous treatment facilities at the hospital.

On January 29th, 2010, our Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) announced that more than \$14 million will be used to purchase and install replacement diagnostic equipments in a variety of hospitals in Manitoba. At the Victoria General Hospital they will be receiving a portable C-Arm operating room machine.

Budget 2010 provides additional funding to construct a new, state-of-the-art Women's Hospital. The facility will create a new standard for maternal care by offering contemporary, private rooms that are larger than the traditional hospital rooms. The rooms will have a home-like feel and provide a safe, accessible environment that emphasizes patient privacy. The design of the hospital is in keeping with the views expressed in the public consultations that were undertaken to gather input from women and their families prior to the design of the new hospital.

* (16:10)

In addition to paying attention to health care as a vital front-line service, we are also ensuring that education and training is kept as a top priority for our government. We are directing 90 percent of new spending to health care, education and training and justice.

Included in our commitments for 2010 is that we will be providing increased funding of 3 percent for public schools, providing a 4.5 percent increase in operating funding to post-secondary institutions, funding apprenticeship training will be raised by \$2 million.

And I was pleased to be able to take part today in the media challenge that highlights the importance of education here in Manitoba as part of Education Week. I took part in that event, along with the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), the MLA for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) and the MLA for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe). Our team showed the importance of teamwork and proudly took home first place in the competition and, as a result, \$1,000 will be donated to the right for play.

We are also going to make sure that a tuition fee increase of 5 percent at universities and only \$150 a year at colleges is instituted. We're also creating a new grant for students who need additional financial support to attend school.

We are paying attention to the key services. Our government is also trying to, and working hard, at managing government spending. We're limiting growth to core government spending to an annual average growth of less than 2 percent over a five years. To achieve this, we are decreasing the budgets of one-half of all government departments, to ensure that we can focus on the services that are considered most important.

Mr. Acting Speaker, our government wants to ensure that we are playing a role in stimulating the economy. We want to ensure that money flows to important investments in our infrastructure that will help our province grow the number of jobs available and provide vital highways and buildings for Manitoba.

We are investing \$1.8 billion in infrastructure spending in Budget 2010. This is a 90 percent increase over 2008. It will create 29,000 direct and indirect jobs.

Our government is proud to be supporting highway upgrades. Included in this is upgrades to Highway 75, a critical north-south corridor that travels through my community of St. Norbert. In this budget we are continuing support for CentrePort Canada, Manitoba's 20,000-acre inland port. Also encompassed in this is money to construct an overpass at the CPR's main line and at the Perimeter Highway crossing.

This budget provides \$148 million to replace and repair bridges. Bridges are vital to effective and safe transportation. I appreciate that our government is paying attention to this important linkage that ensures that you can safely travel around our province.

On April 13th this year, we announced that we are fast-tracking the reconstruction of the Pierre Delorme Bridge that can be found at St. Adolphe at a cost of \$15 million.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we can also see that we are paying attention to the north. We announced funding of 700 and-\$72.5 million for an all-weather road that will assist people living on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. As we have seen this last winter, climate change is wrecking havoc with our winter roads and it's very important that we develop this in a timely fashion.

In addition to our investment in roads, we are also providing \$30 million to the Canada-Manitoba

infrastructure programs. The construction of new recreation centres and much-deserved community projects are a part of this funding.

We have also seen, Mr. Acting Speaker, that trends in the housing stats are up here in Manitoba. They're up to a 20-year high. The Winnipeg home-building sector has posted the best numbers in March for the last two decades for single-family homes. This is important as it shows that they have confidence here in Winnipeg in our economy as people are interested in purchasing new homes.

Yesterday, Mr. Acting Speaker, we saw a very important educational announcement take place, our government's commitment to invest \$82 million to construct a new 84,000-square-foot Thompson campus as part of the University College of the North. Construction will begin this fall and will help many northern Manitobans achieve their desired goal of being able to participate in post-secondary education in a facility close to home.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we know that people who are trained in northern Manitoba will likely make their home in northern Manitoba. This new construction will result in an increased student capacity to 510 from its current 342 students. I commend our government on prioritizing the needs for modern education facilities in the north. I am especially pleased to see that the new facility provides space to house First Nation elders, ceremonial services and other Aboriginal student services that are being made available.

In conclusion, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to say that I am very pleased to be able to stand on this House-side of the House and support our government's 2010 budget. This budget focussed on the priorities of Manitobans and maintains the funding needed to ensure that education, health care, training, public safety and support to families is maintained. Our government has proven that we are facing the challenges of this economic downturn by injecting stimulus funding to ensure that important projects are completed and jobs are made available for Manitobans.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I am very happy to see that this budget puts forward a long-term plan to return our government to surplus and ensures that important services that are valued by Manitobans are funded. Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise in the House

and talk about the 2010-2011 provincial budget, and it's certainly a pleasure to be surrounded by my colleagues who have, for the most part over the last week, been able to provide their insight into the provincial NDP budget.

First off, I do want to congratulate the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) on his win and welcome him to the Chamber. I'm sure he'll be here for some time and be able to learn the ropes as we all do. It's certainly a great place to come to work each and every day.

And it's certainly a great pleasure for me to represent the fine constituents of Turtle Mountain, and it is indeed a pleasure to speak on their behalf. So, when I look at the budget document that's been presented by the NDP, I certainly look at it from a perspective of my constituents and how they would view this particular budget, and, hopefully, Mr. Acting Speaker, I can give you that kind of perspective from the constituents of Turtle Mountain in the great south-central part of southern Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm—the first thing that caught my attention here after the budget is the money that the government spends on advertising their Manitoba-moves-forward plan, and I think they're actually using the plan—the word "plan" pretty loosely, because I don't really see a plan or a vision in any of the documents that have been provided. I guess that's the nature of politics. You know, we go out there and the politicians or the government of the day will tell people what they want to hear. It may not be always factually correct, but at least they like to leave the perception that things are good, that things are rosy, and they're working towards a mission or a vision.

But the reality is I don't see—I don't see a plan. You know, a couple years ago—I will give the government credit. When they brought forward their budget, they actually did have a plan and a tax plan for Manitobans, and at that time, two years ago, in their budget, they had a pretty forward-thinking vision, I thought, on how they were going to reduce taxes for Manitobans. But that was two years ago, Mr. Acting Speaker, and last year that particular vision was missing in the budget document and this year we don't have anything at all that resembles a vision for Manitoba down the road. If we look at the very short document that talks about their five-year economic plan, it's only a—it's a seven-page document, eight when you count the cover, but there's really nothing in there on how we're going to

move forward in the province of Manitoba. Now, we know, in general terms, what they're talking about, and, in general terms what they're saying is, the government is going to have spending growth of less than 2 percent.

* (16:20)

The other thing they're telling is that the government revenue growth is going to be 3.2 percent. Now I'm not sure who's making these suggestions or how they're going to get there, and that really is the crux of the matter. We don't know how those numbers are going to be attainable. Mr. Acting Speaker, this is really should be cause for concern for all Manitobans, because there's no clear direction on how we're going to move Manitoba forward. And I think what we should do is reflect upon the history of the NDP and their past budgets, and budgets are really just a guess of where we're going to be 12 months from now.

But let's go back and have a look at what's happened back the last few years in terms of their predictions in where their budget is going to be. In 2007 and 2008, this NDP government overspent their budget by \$264 million. They missed the mark by \$264 million back in 2007-2008; 2008-2009, overspent their budget \$321 million. They missed their mark by \$321 million. And this past year, Mr. Acting Speaker, we're not exactly sure where we're going to be at the end of the day, but there's an expectation we're going to miss the mark by about \$420 million. That means the government is probably going to overspend their budget from last year by \$420 million.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if you add that up, in the last three budgets this government has missed the mark, overspent their budget by close to a billion dollars. So how should Manitobans feel comfortable with the budget that's before us today?

Let's just have a look at some of the numbers that they've got in this particular budget too. I want to kind of keep this thing in big picture context. This particular budget is a \$10.8-billion budget; \$10.8 billion is what the government expects to spend this year here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Now let's go back 10 short years ago when the NDP first became elected. The provincial budget was in the neighbourhood of \$5 billion. For the most important part, we have, in essence, doubled this

budget in 10 years. This NDP government has doubled their spending by double in 10 years, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's not that the revenue has gone up that high either. That's the other important component of a budget is the revenue. Now they have had unprecedented revenue and transfers from the federal government. I will give them that, but the revenue has not kept up with their spending habits. So they keep spending more money than they're taking in. As a result of that spending, we now are going to have a \$23.4-billion provincial debt—\$23.4 billion of debt the NDP have accumulated.

They've increased the debt to the province and to each individual Manitoban by a substantial amount of money. Mr. Acting Speaker, this provincial budget looks like we're going to add \$545 million more debt. That is if the NDP actually spend within what they say within the budget, but their track record isn't very good in that regard. So what we're going to have is an extra two and a quarter billion dollars of debt tacked on here almost immediately. And let's keep that in mind. When we have debt, and we have—if we happen to have debt at home, there's a cost to that debt, and the cost is interest charges on that debt. This budget says that we are going to be spending \$767 million this year to service that debt, \$767 million that cannot be used for services to Manitobans. And there's no sign for at least five years that the debt of the province is going to go down. In fact, the prediction is the debt will—the deficits will be here for the next five years, which will increase the debt even more.

And the scary part about that, Mr. Acting Speaker, is the fact that interest rates are headed the wrong way. In fact, there's a report in the *BusinessWeek* today where the Province of Manitoba plans to borrow a total of \$3.4 billion during the next fiscal year—and that's the fiscal year that began April 1st—including \$1.29 billion is going to be for refinancing existing debt. So here we are, we're going out to the markets, and we're going out to the foreign markets to borrow \$3.4 billion.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, you know, we had quite a number of high school kids in the gallery today, and those are the people that are going to have to pay for decisions made by the government of today. And that's something I don't think the government of the day is paying enough attention to, because the decisions they are making today impact people for generations to come.

Now, we talk about servicing this debt of \$767 million with interest payments. We are talking \$1.9 million a day of interest. That is the same as \$80,000 per hour we are paying in interest charges or \$1,500 a minute in interest charges. That is a substantial amount of money that cannot be used for any other service here in the province of Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, we've also seen—with this increase in debt, we've seen the NDP put themselves in a bit of a box, because two years ago they had to change their—the legislation in regard to balanced budget legislation. So they thought they could change that two years ago and they would be good for the future and everything would be rosy. Well, here we are two years later. The government can't live within its means and now they're going to have to change their own legislation less than two years later—not a very good sign of fiscally responsible government.

And, not only that, we do have our little rainy day fund, a little bit of money set aside, nothing compared to our neighbours to the west, but we do have a little bit of money set aside, although a lot of that money is going to be allocated for health care. It's federal money. It's been allocated for health care. But some of the money that has been set aside is going to be used to pay down debt, which really seems kind of ironic when you look at the big picture. Again, it's not a very good sign of fiscal management.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it's all about setting priorities here. And we know the government can spend money, and we know the government has pet projects they want to spend money on, and we can appreciate that. You know, we agree with some of the issues, some of the infrastructure they're looking at. We're not always in agreement in terms of how they get there and what kind of deals they sign, and I'll get to that in more detail.

But one thing I do want to talk about, firstly, is Manitoba Hydro. Now, we know the provincial government is looking to use Crown corporations to try to balance its budget, and we know they rely on those Crown corporations for some of the revenue. I mean, look at Manitoba Hydro, for instance. The Manitoba government charges water rental rates. They charge a fee to use water here in the province of Manitoba. And they also charge Manitoba Hydro a fee to make sure that the debt of Manitoba Hydro is paid off, and that amounts to close to \$200 million a

year the NDP government will collect from Manitoba Hydro directly.

Over the last 10 years, in fact, Manitoba Hydro has written a cheque to the government of Manitoba for \$2.5 billion—\$2.5 billion right out of Manitoba Hydro. And I think it's important to remember, Mr. Acting Speaker, that there's only one taxpayer here in the province of Manitoba: 1.2 million of us here as shareholders in the company, as shareholders, as taxpayers of Manitoba.

Well, we know the government goes off when they say, you know, the sky is falling, here's what the Conservatives are going to do, blah, blah, blah. Well, nothing can be far from the truth, Mr. Acting Speaker. In fact, what we're trying to do is save Manitoba Hydro from the NDP government. The NDP are single-handedly trying to dismantle Manitoba Hydro, and we think it's our responsibility to try to save Manitoba Hydro from the NDP.

*(16:30)

Let's look at the biggest political decision being made at the hands of Manitoba Hydro. We know all along for 20 years Manitoba Hydro wanted to build another bipole transmission line north and south, and we agree that should be done. Obviously, there's a big reliability issue there. It should be looked after. At the stroke of a pen—at the stroke of the pen, the minister of Finance at the time, the minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, now the Premier (Mr. Selinger), with the stroke of a pen said we're going to spend at least \$640 million extra and run that line down the west side of the province, and we asked why and we still haven't got a valid explanation of why. It's pretty clear that he's scared about the American environmentalist movement and he's afraid of the Bobby Kennedy Juniors of the world and he's not, he's afraid to stand up for Manitobans. He's afraid to stand up for ratepayers of Manitoba Hydro. He's afraid to stand up for all Manitobans and do what's right, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it's pretty clear that the political decisions that they are making will cost each and every one of us, and I can only point back to the Public Utilities Board report where they say that that extra cost will be borne by Manitoba Hydro ratepayers. It will not be borne by our export markets. We, as Manitoba ratepayers, will have to pay for that. And if you look at where Manitoba Hydro rates are going, you know, they're increased almost 18 percent under the NDP. They're up 2.9 percent effective April 1 in an interim rate just

set by the PUB just a very short time ago, and we're expecting it to go even higher. Manitoba Hydro themselves are saying for the next 10 years, each and every one of the next 10 years, they would like to see hydro rates, domestic hydro rates, go up 3.5 percent per year. That's where domestic hydro rates are going to go, and they're going up because of decisions being made by this government.

An Honourable Member: Your leader said take it to the market.

Mr. Cullen: Well let me tell the Minister of Finance (Ms. Wowchuk) where the market is going, where the market is going in the United States, and if the minister, the new minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro has a real solid look at what's going on, if she looks at the latest quarterly report from Manitoba Hydro, she will see the export revenue down 38 percent for the first nine months of the year. Export revenue for Manitoba Hydro down 38 percent, Mr. Acting Speaker. That's where things are going on the export market. Now that should raise a real red flag with the Minister of Finance who is using Manitoba Hydro to balance her books because if now the Manitoba Hydro are going to show a lot less revenue—we're talking revenue down hundreds of millions of dollars—that's not going to reflect very well on her bottom line at the end of the year, so she should be paying very close attention to what's going on at Manitoba Hydro. And she should be having a real sober second look at their decision to run the bipole line on the west side of the province.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, we can argue back and forth about how much extra this line is going to cost us. We just know the nuts and bolts of the basic capital cost. We're not sure what the extra operating costs are going to be. In committee, you know, talking to Mr. Brennan, he can talk about operating costs. He's not even sure what the operating costs are. We're not even sure what the acquisition of the property to run this line is going to cost. When it goes over agriculture land, there's going to be substantial costs to Manitoba Hydro to run those lines, and we don't know what those kind of costs are going to be.

We don't know what the extra maintenance costs are going to be for that line too. You know, we do know it's going to be four or five hundred kilometres longer so we know without any word of a doubt that it's going to be substantially extra operational and maintenance costs.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about an extra line loss, extra line length, we also talk about line loss, and this line loss can be very substantial. In fact, we've heard it reported from Manitoba Hydro it could be as high as \$50 million a year—\$50 million a year—in line loss. Now if Manitoba Hydro ratepayers should be quite upset about a decision like this because it's going to cost them out of their pocket, \$50 million a year based on the one decision that this government has taken. That is very, very substantial.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we talk about priorities. And you know I represent a relatively rural riding, and it was quite amazing to—not to hear the word "agriculture" mentioned in this budget. Unfortunately, we didn't hear the word "agriculture" here in the budget in Manitoba. Now the government can find hundreds of millions of dollars to give away in a stadium, or they can find hundreds of millions of dollars to back an American company to come in here and build wind farms, or they spend hundreds of million dollars to remove nitrogen here in the city of Winnipeg. But where is it, where is their priorities for each and every Manitoban, Mr. Speaker? That's what we're asking.

You know, the budget for agriculture and rural development was decreased 4.2 percent this year, and it goes back to my earlier comments on how are we going to move Manitoba forward? And I think there's tremendous opportunities in rural Manitoba to move the economy forward and if the government chooses to ignore rural Manitoba and the economic development opportunities there, they do that at their own risk. And to actually have a decrease in the budget for rural economic development, I think is very hurtful, and it's hurtful to the economy of Manitoba and the government of the day will suffer because they're not paying attention to the tremendous opportunities in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about infrastructure as well, and, you know, we know the government is spending money on infrastructure. We know they can spend money. We're interested in getting results for that, and I just want to bring one particular situation here in my riding which I think highlights where things are at and where things maybe got sidetracked. And I'm going to talk about Provincial Road 340 which runs between Highway No. 1 and Highway No. 2.

Quite a number of years ago there was a bridge built over the Assiniboine River, and it was a tremendous access for the communities like Wawanesa and Killarney and Ninette, Dunrea, some of those communities to going north up to CFB Shilo into Brandon, and it was a good piece of infrastructure there. And what happened over the years was there was some pavement put in on north end, pavement put in on the south end, but a section in the middle, 13 kilometres, was never paved. And, quite frankly, it's a safety issue now, where there has been some situations develop over the last couple years where it's not a very safe road conditions. In fact, sometimes that road is not even passable, which is really a disgrace for a provincial road.

And I also have to point out to the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Blaikie) and the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Ashton) that there's a provincial park, a relatively new provincial park, right along that road. And people are having a hard time getting access to that provincial park because the provincial road is usually in such disrepair. So it's something that certainly should be addressed for, you know, a relatively minor amount of money. I'm not sure where it is on the priority list. We don't seem to have an infrastructure priority list coming out from the Province, so we're not sure if it's even on the list. We do know that the minister has said that the vehicle transportation, the daily numbers are fairly adequate to substantiate paving, but we haven't seen him move in that direction to actually get the job done, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is really a budget about spending and it's a budget about taxing. And we know we're not going to get any cuts in our personal income tax. In fact, our taxes are going the other way, but we know that departments have been asked to cut—cut spending, but we also know that those departments have been asked to find new sources of revenue as well.

And it's very disturbing to see the government start taxing food. You know, we've got a government who now decides that if you have a quota, whether it be a milk or a dairy quota, a poultry quota or an egg quota, that we are going to tax that any time you sell it. It's very disturbing to see that happen. You know, we see also the government tax other things too. We've got, you know, taxes on beer, and we've got increased taxes on our car registrations. All those things are kind of a new ways to raise tax revenue in

kind of a hidden form. It's something we're not always used to seeing, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:40)

So, you know, it's quite ingenious the way these guys, as the NDP, can come up with new ways to tax Manitobans. And as I said from the outset, we know what the numbers say, while we're not always sure we can believe the numbers because they haven't been very accurate in meeting their budget numbers over the past number of years.

So I'm just warning all Manitobans that we are in for a time of spending. We're in for future years of deficit budgets. We're in line for increased provincial debt and we're in line for increases in the service costs to those debts. And unfortunately, more and more of our provincial budget is going to be tied up servicing the debt that we have and unfortunately, our children and our grandchildren are going to be paying for the decisions the NDP are making today and in the past. So we hope the NDP government will start taking hard, serious looks at some of the decisions they're making and the implications they will have for future generations of Manitobans. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): It's a privilege to rise today to put a few words on the record with regard to the 2010 provincial budget.

First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people of Brandon East for placing their confidence in me. It's a privilege to represent Brandon East which I'm always proud to remind members is the most progressive, most active constituency in this province and I certainly share that perspective on citizen advocacy and citizen activism in advancing progressive causes in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2010 provides a five-year economic plan for the province which sees us returning to surplus in 2014. I'd also like to remind members opposite that the 2009 shortfall in Manitoba was the smallest shortfall in Canada which is high praise indeed for the current Premier (Mr. Selinger) and former minister of Finance in terms of his fiscal management of our province. We are, in fact, the strongest, economically strongest, province in Canada today.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2010 increases the unconditional operating funding to municipalities which includes my own City of Brandon. That

municipality has seen over 50 percent increase in its operating support from the Province since we assumed office, a historic high level of support for the City of Brandon.

Budget 2010 also calls for the establishment of an early childhood educator pension plan and an increase in child care spaces, Mr. Speaker, two things which are very, very important to constituents in Brandon. In fact, it's very important to Manitobans generally, Mr. Speaker. Early childhood educators provide some of the most important services conceivable for the people in our province. In fact, they provide support to our young people at their very earliest age which is so important in establishing a strong, healthy future for young people and, in fact, supporting families and communities.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2010 also provides for continued—continues to provide for increased police officers in Brandon directly funded by the Province of Manitoba. When members opposite had the opportunity to be in government during the 1990s, they did not, in fact, support police services and protective services anywhere, forget about the city of Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2010 also provides for the establishment of over 1,500 new social housing units in the province of Manitoba, something that is very important in my home constituency and, in fact, last Friday I was in Brandon to announce the first family housing units, affordable housing for families, in a quarter of a century. There hasn't been any affordable housing units for families in Brandon since the Pawley years. During the 1990s, in fact, there wasn't a stick of affordable housing built anywhere in the province by members opposite which left us in quite a considerable deficit situation for the poorest members of our society to find affordable housing in the province. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let's have a little decorum here.

I'm sure the honourable member has already had his chance to speak and, if not, everyone will get their chance. Just be a little patient and whoever has the floor should be heard. Whether you agree or not, that's not the point. Every member has the right to be heard and we have freedom of speech here, so the honourable member for Brandon East has the floor.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the outburst from my friend from Brandon West. I'm

quite used to it after a couple of decades of working with him, and it is always entertaining and it does provide emphasis for what I'm saying in terms of Budget 2010.

Budget 2010 also provides for an expansion of the licensed practical nurse program at ACC to convert into a nurse diploma program, something that all health-care professionals who are in the region appreciate to expand their ability to get credentials. And, in fact, further to the health care in Manitoba, Budget 2010 provides for 60 percent of our capital to be dedicated directly to health-care capital, something that's very, very important.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to be very brief in my comments, because budgets provide us with an opportunity to review in an active and a precise fashion the work of our government. And I just want to review, beginning with health care, some of the initiatives that this government has supported and funded and invested in and members opposite have voted against over the last number of years.

Starting with health care, the first major capital investment we made in Brandon was the development of the Brandon Regional Health Centre, a \$50-million project that this government invested in, something that was promised by members opposite over seven times over the time of their reign during the 1990s and was reneged upon every single time. This government invested in it and provided money for it. Members opposite voted against it. They voted against building the Brandon Regional Health Centre and, in fact, Mr. Speaker, they voted against providing the CancerCare treatment facility for Brandon. They voted against the first MRI facility outside the city of Winnipeg, in Brandon. They voted against the renewal of the Brandon ambulance fleet. They voted against the Westman laboratory redevelopment. They voted against the health-care components for Rivers, for Killarney, for Virden, for Melita. We invested in those health-care facilities, provided the money to invest in those health-care facilities. Members opposite opposed and voted against those health-care investments.

Mr. Speaker, on the education front, members opposite voted against the establishment of Assiniboine Community College on Brandon's North Hill. We provided the investment to develop that facility; members opposite opposed it. Members opposite voted against the development of the Health Studies building at Brandon University. They voted

against the increase for the development of the power plan at Brandon University. They voted against the wellness centre, even though the federal government, the federal Conservative government supported our government in that initiative. Members opposite voted against those investments. Members opposite voted against increasing the police force in Brandon. Members opposite voted against neighbourhood renewal in Brandon. Members opposite voted against all of the tax cuts that have been implemented.

We are now going this year, in Budget 2010, no business tax in the province of Manitoba. Members opposite are voting against that. Members opposite voted against a neighbourhood renewal that's taking place. They voted against every single affordable housing project in the city of Brandon. Members opposite talk about supporting their communities. Talk is cheap, Mr. Speaker. Our government is investing in Brandon. It's investing in Manitoba. Members opposite are opposing investment in Manitoba. Members opposite voting—are voting against every improvement to the city of Brandon. They're voting against every improvement to communities throughout Manitoba. They're voting against investing in this province and building a better future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, to follow the logic that the member from Brandon East talks about, you would ultimately be led to believe that every member that votes against the budget would, in fact, be voting against every aspect of expenditure the government does in the entire province of Manitoba. People need to realize, and I'm sure that they do, even though the member from Brandon East and possibly others within his caucus do not, that their—when you spend \$10 billion, in most part, that money is going to be spent for worthy things.

* (16:50)

I have voted now against government budgets, I believe, 18 or 19 times, and I will continue to vote against this particular budget. I would go further, Mr. Speaker, by saying this budget is likely the budget that most concerns me in regards to the future of the province of Manitoba and, I believe, at the end of the day, that there are many different governments, given the same resources that this government has been given, that would be able to do a far superior job in serving Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker there are ample examples of absolute and total waste. There are examples of where the government is, in essence, misleading and manipulating the books. I would like just to talk briefly on a couple of the questions that I have put forward which clearly demonstrate the government's unwillingness to be truthful with Manitobans in dealing with the budget.

Today, I asked the question of the Premier (Mr. Selinger). I asked the Premier in terms of balanced budget legislation, legislation that he supported for three consecutive elections, legislation that clearly indicates that what ministers are obligated to do if in fact they run a deficit, and we have found that the government has printed these documents—the documents that the NDP MLAs are going to be voting in favour are, of, clearly states the money has been put in the document itself where every minister is, in fact, going to be receiving more money than they, in fact, received last year. That is the printed statement in the document.

Now, yes, the government has indicated that the salaries will be decreased by 20 percent and the minister responsible for post-secondary education clearly indicated today in QP in her heckling that she's already detected the difference in her pay. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a good thing. Today I asked the Premier, would he in fact make the commitment that as long as there is a deficit, that the ministers will not, or will continue to receive that deduction in ministerial salaries. And he wasn't clear on that particular issue. We'll have to wait and see in terms of the legislation that the government ultimately brings in to amend the current legislation which created the loophole to allow them to get away with what it is they're in fact doing today. That is the reality of it.

For the average person, what they know is in three elections, the minister, the current Premier, made a commitment to have balanced budgets and that commitment has been violated and, Mr. Speaker, to make matters worse, the government says and has reformed and changed balanced budget legislation in order to accommodate their need to be able to spend and their needs in order to borrow money.

Balanced budget legislation, by their—by the time they have—by the time we're into the next provincial election, the balanced budget legislation that we had in 1999 will for all intents and purposes be completely non-existent. Yes, it'll be there in name, Mr. Speaker, but there is no similarities between the

two in a very real way. The government has violated that particular trust.

The other day I asked a question in regards to health care. I asked the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), given the expenditure, we expend more than 40 percent of our expenditures on health care today, and this minister has demonstrated one thing very clearly. She has no real grip on the way in which money is being spent in health care, Mr. Speaker. That the only way that we're going to ensure accountability in health-care expenditures is that we need to hold the regional health-care authorities accountable for the actions that they are taking. I can talk about the bizarre and stupid actions that the regional health took in regards to the Seven Oaks Hospital in the emergency services, and even to this very day this Minister of Health doesn't understand exactly what Winnipeg regional health has actually done at the Seven Oaks Hospital because she attempted to defend them yesterday in her answer to my question.

There are issues that are out there that the regional health authorities throughout this province are taking, positions that they are taking in which this government does not seem to be able to have control over or any idea in terms of what's taking place. And that is why we need to see more accountability in health care, and one of the ways we can do that, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that there's standing committees that deal with the regional health committees. Allow MLAs from all over the province to be able to ask the different regional health authorities what it is that they're actually doing, given the very importance of health care. And the government of the day chooses to ignore that particular issue, and I say shame on them.

Health-care workers, professionals throughout the province have recognized the problems within the health-care bureaucracy. Only this government chooses to ignore it. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they make it worse by continuing to feed an empire that grows and grows and grows and makes it more difficult at the end of the day to ensure that we're getting better quality health-care services.

Mr. Speaker, I canvassed my constituents—and again, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) made inference to while these are the same people that responded, that attended the Seven Oaks Hospital public rally. Well, I can tell the minister the individuals that attended the Seven Oaks public rally were not affiliated with me personally prior. You

know, the 100 or whatever number of people showed up are concerned citizens. I suspect, had she done her homework and she would have checked, she would have found that they were primarily, if they were politically affiliated, just as many of them would have been New Democrats as Liberals as Conservatives, I suspect.

Well, she discredited my constituents by saying, well, they were the same people that did the survey. Well, Mr. Speaker, I take it seriously in terms of surveying my constituents. Thousands of homes in my constituents were actually surveyed, surveys that include 40 questions. All of them, I think, of good calibre questions. Individuals took the time to answer them and respond back. This is not what I believe in terms of what I said the other day when I commented on health care. Is it better than it was in 1999? That was a quote right from the survey results. Hundreds of individual constituents or households of mine that I represent came to me through my questionnaire and said that—more than 50 percent, I believe it was more than 50 percent, said that health care is worse today, the service of health care is worse today than it was back in '99.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I take that very seriously, and that's the reason why I raised it in question period. That is the reason why I asked the minister to acknowledge the importance of bringing these regional health-care authorities before committee of this Legislature. So we can ensure that there's more accountability in health care.

Mr. Speaker, one of the shining policies that has really evolved over the last number of years, which began back in 1998 when Premier Gary Filmon and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien entered into an agreement that established Manitoba's Provincial

Nominee Program—and what a blessing that has been for the province of Manitoba, I must say. It's through that particular program that we have seen the growth, the population growth, in our city of Winnipeg and in rural Manitoba.

The contributions that immigrants have made to our province are enormous, and the contribution over the last number of years in terms of just sheer numbers has fed the growth that the province has endured over the last number of years. In good part, we need to give credit to where credit is due, and it was that particular program that has enabled Manitoba's population to grow to where it is today. It's, in part, enabled our economy to do as well as it is doing today.

It was a good program, and these are the type of programs that we should be looking at in terms of how we can improve, so that going forward that we'll be able to even derive that much more in terms of benefits, Mr. Speaker.

There are issues before us, before this Legislature, that have, will have a profound impact well into the future. Manitoba Hydro is one of those issues. I would suggest to you that the government is wrong in moving forward with the west-side bipole line, that, in fact, they have not been able to demonstrate—under the Lake Winnipeg is, in my opinion, still a viable alternative. I believe the east side is a viable alternative, and we're talking billions, hundreds of millions of dollars—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 19 minutes remaining.

The hour now being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 13, 2010

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